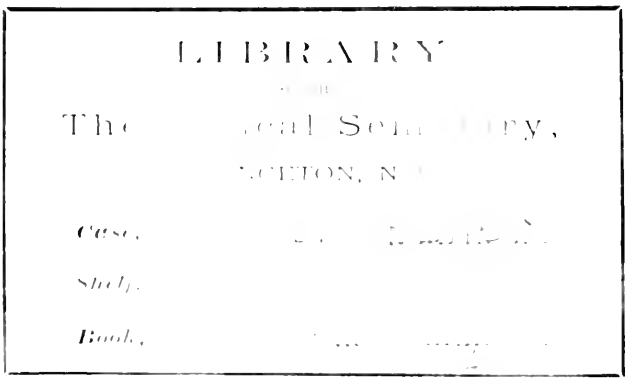
BS1150
.O77
1822
v. 3

Presented to the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. at Princeton N.J.

By Johnell Kreb

LIBRARY
OF THE
The[illegible]ical Sem[illegible]ry,
[illegible]CETON, N[illegible]
Case,
Shelf,
Book,



ORTON'S

EXPOSITION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

VOL. III.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT,

WITH DEVOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL

REFLECTIONS

FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES.

BY THE LATE REV. JOB ORTON, S.T.P..

IN SIX VOLUMES.

PUBLISHED FROM THE AUTHOR'S MANUSCRIPTS

BY ROBERT GENTLEMAN.

A NEW EDITION:

WITH

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

By Andrew Kippis, D.D. F.R.S.

AND AN INDEX OF MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE NOTES AND REFLECTIONS.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK AND JOY;
OGLE, DUNCAN AND CO; G. AND W. B. WHITTAKER;
AND SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL,

MDCCCXXII.

LONDON
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland court.

AN EXPOSITION

OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE

FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL,

CALLED BY THE SEVENTY

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS.

INTRODUCTION.

This Book contains the history of the last two judges, Eli and Samuel, and of Saul, the first king of Israel; including the history of about eighty years. A considerable part of it was written by Samuel himself, particularly what concerned Eli and his own times, and was continued by Nathan, or Gad, or some other inspired prophet

---

CHAPTER I.

Contains an account of the family of Samuel, and his mother's grief before he was born; Hannah's prayer and vow for the removal of her grief; the answer to her prayer; the birth of her son; and the performance of her vow, by the dedication of Samuel to God.

1 NOW there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name [was] Elkanah*, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: 2 And he had two wives, the name of the one [was] Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. *His first wife was barren, he therefore took another; a custom which was tolerated in those*

* Elkanah was a Levite of Ramah, or Arimathea, of the most honourable house of the tribe of Levi.

days: by this wife he had many children, but in other things she was a torment to him. 3 And this man went up out of his city yearly, *according to the law,* to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh, *where the ark and the tabernacle were.* And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD [were] there; *though they were wicked, he did not neglect his duty because he did not like the priests, but came to offer prayer and thanksgiving, and such sacrifices as were suitable to the occasion, which probably was the passover.* 4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions*: 5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion, *or a double portion,* for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb; *he did not love her less because she was barren, but showed her peculiar affection, as a woman of a gracious and tender spirit, to support her under her affliction, and balance her rival's insolence.* 6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. 7 And [as] he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. *On this occasion the other wife twitted her with her barrenness, and the fruitlessness of her prayers. At home she had a separate apartment, but they were obliged now to be together, and she took advantage of this to reproach and provoke her. It was highly unkind and cruel to do it on this solemn occasion, which caused her festival to be turned into a fast.* 8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? [am] not I better to thee than ten sons? *Elkanah knew the cause, but gently reproved her for her dejection on this occasion, and with kind words persuaded her to eat and be cheerful, intimating that she had more comfort in his tender attachment than in many sons.*

9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk; *her husband's kind words had a good effect, and brought her to her meat and her prayers.* Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD, *to keep good order, give advice, explain the law, and bless the worshippers.* 10 And she [was] in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD,

* The males only were obliged to attend; but devout men often took their wives and daughters with them. These had their portion, viz., out of the peace offerings, the greatest part whereof belonged to the offerer, wherewith he and his friends did feast together, see Deut. xii. 12. xvi. 11., Lev. vii. 15. ix. 22.

and wept sore; *her grief returned when she was alone, and she prayed with many tears.* 11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. *Her petition was humble and earnest; she prayed for a man-child, because only such could attend upon the tabernacle*.*

12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. 13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; *she used such gestures with her hands and eyes as showed great inward emotion;* therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14 And Eli said unto her, *by way of reproof,* How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee; *go from this holy place till thou art sober, then return and repent of thy sin.* 15 And Hannah *modestly and humbly* answered and said, No, my lord, *I am not drunk with wine, but* I [am] a woman of a sorrowful, *afflicted* spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul *in sincere and fervent prayer* before the LORD. 16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial, *a wicked, abandoned woman,* for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. 17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant [thee] thy petition that thou hast asked of him. *This respectful answer convinced the old man of his mistake, and he dismissed her with his prayers and blessing.* 18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight, *still enjoy the benefit of thy prayers, and continue in thy good opinion.* So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more [sad,] *being fully persuaded that Eli's prayers and her own would be answered.*

19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, *prayed for a prosperous journey, and confirmed Hannah's vow,* and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her. 20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, *in revolution of days,* after Hannah had conceived, that she

* The Levites served only twenty-five years, and then became judges, or preachers of righteousness; but he was to serve all the days of his life, and be a Nazarite from the womb. The vow was conditional, if it was a son, and he had no defect in his body or mind, and the husband gave his consent.

bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *that is, asked of God,* [saying,] Because I have asked him of the LORD. *The name conveyed useful instruction both to the parents and the child, and this was a circumstance that gave great joy.* 21 And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and *a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God, according to* his vow. 22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, [I will not go up] until the child be weaned, and [then] I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever. *She was not obliged by the law to go with her husband, and therefore chose to continue at home till the child was able to accompany her there, and fit to be left in God's house, and instructed in his service.* 23 And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word, *either Eli's prophetic blessing, or some word of promise made to them which is not mentioned.* So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, *and in token of gratitude, they took* with *them a large offering,* three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child [was] young, *about three years old, as is generally supposed.* 25 And they slew a bullock *for a burnt offering,* and brought the child to Eli, *to inform him of God's goodness, and to offer a peace offering.* 26 And she said, O my lord, [as] thy soul liveth, my lord, I [am] the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. *She makes use of this asseveration, because it was some years before, and he might have forgotten her.* 27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: 28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD, *expressing great earnestness, gratitude, and strong resolution; and notwithstanding all the ties of parental tenderness, and foregoing all her female fears and fondness, she leaves her child and fulfils her vow.* And he worshipped the LORD there. *Some think this refers to Samuel's devoting himself to God; but rather to his father, who renewed his thanksgiving, and sought the blessing of God upon his son, that he would sanctify him, and enable him for the service to which he was devoted.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. SOME lessons which may make us relatively good, may be learned from this chapter. Elkanah shines in the character of an husband, and a devout man. *He feared God with all his house*; took them with him to public worship; was kind and affectionate to a good wife, and bore meekly and patiently the perverse temper and insolent spirit of a bad one. *Husbands are to love their wives, and not be bitter against them*, and should be peculiarly careful to comfort them under their afflictions. Hannah had a meek and devout spirit, worthy the imitation of all wives. They are often in danger of fretfulness, and therefore should guard against it. The insolence and haughtiness of Peninnah are very detestable. Let all be careful to shun a peevish and provoking disposition, for that will, as in the case before us, alienate the affections of the kindest relative. Mothers may learn from Hannah, the duty of nursing their own children, if possible; and not to commit that work to strangers, which God commands and designs for them to do themselves. And though that work may confine them sometimes from public ordinances, as it did Hannah, yet God will accept them in it and bless them. Let parents learn likewise to devote their children to God, to teach them the language of prayer, and bring them to God's tabernacle and ordinances; and then they may hope that they will prove comforts to them. Let us always remember, that he cannot be really good, who is not relatively good.

2. *Is any man afflicted? let him pray.* Under all our troubles, crosses, and vexations, let this be our refuge: let our prayers, like Hannah's, be humble and fervent. We shall find it to be a remedy for every complaint, a support in every trouble, it gives ease to the heart under all our sorrows; it refreshes the mind, and brightens the countenance. And when we seek mercy, let us accompany our prayers with pious resolutions. This we are encouraged to do, since *God hath never said, Seek my face in vain.*

3. Let us be careful to guard against rash censures of others, especially for their devotion. Eli, though a man of God, and a good man, yet erred herein. He should have been better informed before he was so sharp in his rebuke. Hannah was not

noisy and clamorous, as drunkards usually are, and therefore there was the less reason for his suspicion. We should not be forward to believe people guilty of ill things; while the matter is doubtful, charity would hope and believe the best. May we be especially careful not to censure persons for their devotion, as if they were enthusiasts or hypocrites, lest we blame that which God approves.

4. We learn hence, to be modest and humble even in our necessary vindication. Hannah bore this censure excellently well. Had she been of the disposition of many people, she would soon have been in a passion, retorted the charge, bid him look at home, and reprove the debauchery of his sons. She did not angrily tell him how ill it became him, but contented herself with denying the charge, and relating how the fact was. Persons who are censured unjustly, think they have a right to be angry and to complain; but let us guard against this, even for our own interest; for we shall sooner be believed if we are humble and modest. But if we return censure for censure, and railing for railing, we shall bring suspicions of guilt upon ourselves, and injure our own souls. *Christ when he was reviled, reviled not again.*

5. We may hence infer, the odious nature of drunkenness. Hannah called them, with great justness, *children of Belial,* wicked, untractable men, children of the devil. No name is too bad for drunkards, especially women-drunkards, who are generally the worst, when they are habituated to that infamous and pernicious practice. It is highly wicked at any time, more especially so when coming to the worship of God; and the drunken prayers of some unhappy creatures, will be the heaviest and blackest articles in all their charges at the great day. *Be not drunk with wine, in which there is excess; but be filled with the Spirit,* the spirit of devotion, meekness, and humility.—We may observe once more,

6. That those mercies are peculiarly welcome which are granted in answer to prayers, and should be acknowledged with peculiar gratitude. Samuel's parents were full of gratitude, and brought a noble sacrifice. Such mercies claim our warmest praises; such favours should be devoted to God, and employed in his service. Let the temper of David be ours, *I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.* Ps. cxvi. 1, 2.

CHAP. II. 1—21.

We have here Hannah's song of thanksgiving for the mercy of God to her; the bad character of Eli's sons; and God's further favour to the family of Elkanah.

1 AND Hannah prayed*, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD, *she considers her joy as coming from God; the lifting up the horn was a token of triumph:* my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. *She was melancholy before, and durst not speak; but now speaks cheerfully and courageously, because of the singular honour conferred upon her.* 2 [There is] none holy as the LORD: for [there is] none besides thee: neither [is there] any rock like our God; *she acknowledges his supremacy; that he is the only refuge in trouble; there is none else that she can rest upon; all other beings are as nothing to him.* 3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let [not] arrogancy come out of your mouth†: for the LORD [is] a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed; *he judges in the most exact manner, weighs actions in all their circumstances, knows what men think, as well as what they speak and do, and can bring about what seems to men impossible.* 4 The bows of the mighty men [are] broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. *God brings down confident and presumptuous sinners, who trust to their own might, and makes the weak and feeble triumph over them.* 5 [They that were] full *and rich* have hired out themselves for bread, *to satisfy their hunger,* and [they that were] hungry ceased *to be so; such changes we frequently see in the world:* so that the barren hath borne seven, *a proverbial expression for many children;* and she that hath many children is waxed feeble, *through grief for not having more, or for the loss of those which she had.* 6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up;

* This expression is very proper, as praise and thanksgiving are very essential parts of prayer; she adores the divine perfections, especially the goodness of God to her.

† Some refer this to Peninnah; but perhaps it was beneath Hannah to take notice of her poor malice, and may rather refer to the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, by whom they were oppressed.

the power of life and death are in his hand, and all domestic concerns at his disposal. 7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up; *he is the sovereign Lord of the whole world, disposeth all things as he pleaseth, exalts or abases whom he will.* 8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, [and] lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set [them] among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; *he raises the poor to a glorious throne, to dignity and power:* for the pillars of the earth [are] the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them; *therefore he is able to dispose of the inhabitants as he pleaseth.* 9 He will keep the feet of his saints, *direct them in all their ways, and preserve them from danger;* and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, *shall be quite confounded, and brought into a most gloomy and miserable situation;* for by strength shall no man prevail *against God.* 10 The adversaries of the LORD, *the Philistines,* shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them, *destroy them in some dreadful way,* (see ch. vii. 10.); the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed*. 11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest; *performed such service in opening and shutting the doors, lighting the lamps, or the like, as he was able, according to his appointment.*

12 Now the sons of Eli [were] sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD, *they were wicked, disobedient persons, who though they professed to know God, yet in their works denied him.* 13 And the priest's custom with the people [was, that,] when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; 14 And he struck [it] into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. *Their first crime was great injustice, for when any offered sacrifice, they were used to be feasting in some apartment of the tabernacle; and not content with the breast and right shoulder, which was their lot, they took any thing they could lay hold of; and this was done in Shiloh,*

* There was now no king in Israel; therefore some interpret the words as referring to David. But it seems more reasonable to refer them to Christ, especially as there is so remarkable a resemblance between this and the Virgin Mary's song, Luke i. 46, &c. This is the first place in scripture where the word Messiah, or anointed, occurs. As if she had said, God shall make the Messiah great and honourable, and cause him to triumph over all his enemies.

and done constantly. Their second crime was daintiness and luxury. 15 Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. *They were not content with boiled meat, but would have what part they liked raw, to dress as they pleased, as the fleshhook did not always bring up the best piece.* 16 And [if] any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and [then] take [as much] as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, [Nay;] but thou shalt give [it me] now: and if not, I will take [it] by force. *Their third crime was sacrilege; before the fat was burnt, which was presented to God, they would be served. The Israelites so well knew the law, that they were desirous God's altar should be served first; but the priest's servants, who had learnt insolence from their master, would not allow this, and would even take it by force.* 17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD, *and did not care to offer sacrifices, when there were such abuses committed about them.*

18 But Samuel ministered before the LORD, [being] a child, girded with a linen ephod*. *He performed such services as he was capable of, and did not follow the example of this wicked priest.* 19 Moreover his mother, *to show her piety and affection,* made him a little coat, and brought [it] to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20 And Eli blessed Elkanah, and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. 21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD. *Thus God rewarded her heroic piety in devoting her only son to the Lord, by giving her many more children.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught from Hannah's song, that *our souls should magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our saviour.* This composure is sublime and eloquent, as well as devout, and

* He wore an ephod, not such an one as the high priest wore, but a kind of honourable garment, used by the inferior priests, and provided at the public expense.

intimates to us the reasonableness of prayer and thanksgiving, of recollecting divine mercies, and keeping a written memorial of them, to cherish our gratitude. Let us learn to bless God for every appearance of providence for us; to rejoice and delight in him, to take comfort in his perfect rectitude, his universal and perfect knowledge, his almighty power, and unerring justice. Let us remember, that he knows our thoughts, and weighs our actions in an equal balance, and therefore be solicitous to be approved of him. We should own and adore him in all the changes he makes in our circumstances, or in the circumstances of others; and not be proud and talk arrogantly in the highest station, since God may bring us low, to poverty, contempt, and even to death itself in a moment. When we are most abased and distressed, let us not despair, because he can presently and surprisingly exalt us. Let us *trust in him, wait upon him,* and rejoice in that comfortable promise, *he will keep the feet of his saints;* will direct, defend, and support them. They are often set in slippery places, and need his assistance to keep their feet from falling. Let us dread the doom of his enemies, who shall be confounded and ruined; *he will thunder upon them,* and then what can men do? Let us especially learn to rejoice in the advancement and security of the Messiah's kingdom, and the destruction of all the enemies of his church, and approve ourselves his faithful subjects, that we may have reason now, and through all eternity, to rejoice in his complete salvation.

2. See what sad creatures wicked priests are; they are the worst men upon earth. What vile wretches were these sons of Eli; who was himself in the main an upright, holy man! They were the scandal of religion, the contempt of all sober and virtuous people, yea, the contempt of the most wicked, all the people cried shame on them. It was indeed a shame to see such greedy dogs, (as the prophet calls such priests), men given up to their belly and to their lusts. May God awaken all ministers to guard against the lusts of the flesh, that his offerings and service be not abhorred, religion dishonoured, and its interest weakened by those who should be its patrons and ornaments.

3. We see that *God is not unrighteous to forget any labour of love* for his honour. Elkanah and Hannah left their only and favourite son before the Lord, and he repaid it with interest, and recompensed it with salvation. No one will lose by lending to God; he will take care to repay them. Let us then exercise

faith in his promises, and never distrust his kindness; for God is able to make every temporal favour and benefit abound to us, and to *bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.*

CHAP. II. 22, to the end.

We have here more abominations of Eli's sons, and his too gentle reproof of their crimes; with a very awful reproof and denunciation, sent to Eli on this account by a prophet.

22 NOW Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel, *but by reason of his great age he could not examine into their conduct, as he otherwise would have done; but he heard of the notorious villanies practised by them,* and how they lay with the women that assembled [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, *who either lived in the apartments of the tabernacle, and were employed in the necessary work of it, or rather, such as came to worship there, and bring the customary sacrifice.* 23 And he *gently reproved them, and* said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. 24 Nay, my sons; for [it is] no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD's people to transgress, *by neglecting his sacrifice, and committing folly with you*.* 25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him†? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them; *he determined to punish them himself.* 26 And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.

27 And there came a man of God, *a prophet,* unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, *that is, Aaron,* when they were in Egypt in

* This was the language of an indulgent parent, but not of a righteous and zealous judge. He should have told them their actions were vile and abominable; should have cast them out of the priesthood, and even have put them to death for adultery, according to God's law.

† Here he argued well with them. If one neighbour do an injury to another, the judge may interpose, and punish the guilty. But if one injure the judge himself, who shall interpose for him? Who will plead with a prince to pardon one who has attempted to take away his life?

Pharaoh's house*? 28 And did I choose him, *that is, Aaron and his family,* out of all the tribes of Israel [to be] my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense; to wear an ephod before me, *to consult God, and receive voices and revelations from him?* and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel; *something of all the sacrifices, even the skin of the burnt offerings?* 29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice, and at mine offering, which I have commanded [in my] habitation, *treat it with the highest irreverence and contempt,* and honourest thy sons above me†, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? *pampering yourselves with my offerings.* 30 Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed [that] thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD, saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. *Here God revokes the conditional decree, that Eli and his family should continue priests for ever*‡. 31 Behold, the days come that I will cut off thine arm, *thy power and authority,* and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house, *they shall all be cut off in the flower of their age*§. 32 And thou, *that is, thy posterity, (this is a usual scripture phrase)* shalt see an enemy [in my] habitation, in all [the wealth] which [God] shall give Israel, *when Israel shall be most wealthy and glorious, and the priesthood be a most honourable and lucrative post*‖: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. 33 And the

* It was the usual way of prophets, to bring men to humility and repentance by recounting the divine favours, and thereby showing how their guilt was aggravated.

† Eli was included in this charge, because he tolerated the evil; suffering them to continue in office, and allowing them to treat God's service so shamefully; choosing rather to humour and please them, than vindicate the honour of his worship from those abuses they put upon it.

‡ The priesthood, it seems, for some reason or other not mentioned in scripture, had been transferred from the family of Eleazar, Aaron's eldest son, to Ithamar, the younger son, from whom Eli was descended, but now is translated back again. As if he had said, Though I made such a promise, yet imagine not that I will be a partner in such crimes as yours, or connive at such wickedness. And the reason he gives is a standing rule in God's government, that he will give men honour and esteem according as they behave; and wicked men who contemn God, shall be despised both by God and man.

§ This particularly refers to the destruction of the priests by Doeg in Saul's time. See ch. xxii. 18.

‖ Some understand this of the Philistines defeating the Israelites and taking the ark; but I rather think it refers to the removal of his family, which happened eighty years after, in Solomon's time; when Israel was in the greatest prosperity; and another was put in, whom they looked upon as an enemy and a rival.

man of thine, [whom] I shall not cut off from mine altar, [shall be] to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age, *those who survived should live in poverty and contempt, and be a grief to all their friends and families.* 34 And, *as a proof that all this shall come to pass,* this [shall be] a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. *He should see this himself, and might therefore conclude that all the rest of the threatening should be fulfilled: nevertheless, to comfort Israel, he promises the priesthood shall be continued.* 35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, [that] shall do according to [that] which [is] in mine heart and in my mind*: and I will build him a sure house, *multiply his family and continue him in place and power,* and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever†, *he shall direct the king in his proceedings, and consult for him in difficult cases.* 36 And it shall come to pass, [that] every one that is left in thine house shall come [and] crouch to him for a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread; *the children of those who were so dainty that they must have the choicest pieces of the sacrifice, shall be reduced so low as to beg their bread, and be glad of the meanest office or pension to keep them from starving.* *See* 1 Kings ii. 26, 27.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We may observe that those who are deaf to reproof, especially to parental reproof, are in the way to ruin, *v.* 25. Eli's sons would not hearken; therefore God determined to slay them, and make them public examples of his displeasure. There is not a surer sign of an hardened sinner, a brutish wretch, *a son of Belial,* than despising and rejecting the reproofs of pious parents. Accordingly Solomon lays it down as a maxim, and this story confirms the truth of it, that *he who being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

2. Steady piety in young people is peculiarly honourable, especially when they have bad examples before them. The enco-

* This refers to Zadok, who was faithful to God, to David, and to Solomon, and succeeded Abiathar, of the family of Eli.

† The priesthood continued in this family till the Babylonish captivity, and very probably till the time of Christ.

mium upon Samuel in this chapter is very remarkably introduced. After the wickedness of Eli's sons had been specified, then comes Samuel's good character, *v.* 18, 26. He minded his business, and did it, unmoved by the example of those wicked priests, though they were his superiors in age, knowledge, and station. He kept his integrity, regarded and profited by Eli's instruction; and God loved him, Eli loved him, and all the good people of Israel loved him. Good children and pious youths will always be the favourites of heaven, and the darlings of all wise and good men; and the more bad examples and powerful temptations they have about them, the greater will be their honour, and the more God and man will love them. It should be the hearty wish and prayer of us all, that that may be the character of all our children and young friends, which was the character of Samuel, and of one greater and better than him, even *the holy child Jesus;* that they may *grow in wisdom as* they do *in stature, and in favour with God and man.*

3. Let us attend to that important maxim, that settled rule of God's government, that *those who honour him, he will honour.* If we honour God by serious worship, by a holy behaviour, and zeal for his glory, he will honour us by reputation among men, his own esteem, and innumerable benefits. But *if we despise him,* by forgetting his worship, breaking his laws, and being unconcerned about his glory, we shall sink into contempt, become mean and vile creatures, and be the objects of the divine displeasure; which is the greatest evil that can possibly befall us. Religion makes men honourable in the sight of God, and all wise and good beings; but sin is the greatest dishonour to human nature, and will bring upon men everlasting shame, contempt, and reproach. Once more,

4. Let parents learn from the awful threatening denounced against Eli, the terrible consequence of spoiling their children, and conniving at their vices. Eli appears in every other respect to have been a worthy, good man; but a foolish partiality and fondness for his children brought ruin upon them. He reproved them indeed, but it was in the most gentle manner for the most execrable crimes; and treated them more lightly than he did Hannah, whom he only suspected. See how easily even the best parents may err in the treatment of their children; and how *he that spareth reproof and correction, spoileth his child.* But let them remember, that if they connive at the vices of their children, or their neglect or contempt of divine worship, God will not.

Let parents then reprove and admonish, and always proportion their reproofs to the nature of the crime; otherwise *they honour their children above God:* an awful and awakening expression! Those who allow their children in any evil way, are more tender of them than of God's honour and glory, more solicitous to honour their children than please and honour him. Eli could not have contrived a surer way to plague himself and his family, than by this indulgence to his children. Let parents guard against this conduct, or they will make a sword for themselves, which will pierce them to their heart, and are taking the direct method to entail poverty and ruin upon their posterity. They should take warning by this melancholy story, and not be accessary to the present and eternal ruin of their children: and thus, as was the case with Eli, have *their grey hairs brought down with sorrow to the grave.*

CHAPTER III.

We have here God's extraordinary discovery of himself to Samuel; the message he delivered to him; the delivery of that message to Eli; and the establishment of Samuel to be a prophet in Israel.

1 AND the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli, *in such services as Eli directed.* And the word of the LORD was precious in those days, *the spirit of prophecy was very rare and uncommon;* [there was] no open vision; *though some might have particular revelations for their own private direction, yet there was scarce any public prophet to whom the people might commonly resort for information; this honour was reserved for Samuel.* 2 And it came to pass at that time, *when visions were so uncommon,* when Eli [was] laid down in his place, *was gone to rest in some apartment near the tabernacle,* and his eyes began to wax dim, [that] he could not see; *his sight failed him, so that he often wanted help, and Samuel was ever ready to come at his call:* 3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God [was,] and Samuel was laid down [to sleep;] 4 That the LORD called Samuel, *by a voice from the oracle between the cherubim in the most holy place,* and he answered, Here [am] I. 5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here

[am] I; for thou calledst me. And *Eli, supposing* he *might dream that he was called,* said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. 6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here [am] I; for thou didst call me. *Samuel thought it could be no one else, for it was night, and the doors were shut.* And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him; *he did not know how God revealed himself to the prophets, and had not learnt to distinguish between the voice of God and that of a man.* 8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here [am] I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. *The repetition of the voice led Eli to conclude that it must be the Lord who spoke. This was a great mortification to Eli, to have a child, who was his servant, thus called and sent with a message to him: it would make him solicitous to know what the message was, and lead him to give credit to it.* 9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth; *he tells him in effect that it was God's voice, and directs him how to behave.* So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. *Besides the voice which now came nearer, there was probably some bright luminous appearance.* Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. *He omitted the word Lord, either through fear, or hurry of his spirits, or from an uncertainty whether it was the Lord's voice or not.*

11 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle, *shall be stricken with horror and astonishment.* 12 In that day, *in the season that I have appointed for this work,* I will perform against Eli all [things] which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin, I will also make an end; *though part of the threatening I have already denounced may be delayed, yet I will persevere until all shall be fulfilled.* 13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; *he could not be ignorant of these public iniquities, for they were the general complaint;* because his sons made themselves vile *in the sight of God, and contemptible in the eyes of all the people,* and he restrained them not, *frowned not*

upon them, did not reprove them, as a father, suspend them from their office, as high priest, and capitally punish them, as a judge and magistrate, if the other methods had no effect. 14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever; *there shall be no abatement of the punishment, no sacrifice accepted.*

15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. *This was part of his work, the tabernacle being included in a house or building.* And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision; *having no command to deliver this message, he was unwilling to distress the good old man.* 16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here [am] I. 17 And he said, What [is] the thing that [the LORD] hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide [it] not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide [any] thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. *Eli having been so solemnly threatened before, concluded that it related to him; and though he feared the worst, he was willing to know it. But finding Samuel backward to relate it, he adjured him in the most solemn manner to do it.* 18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. *The sentence being pronounced by a child, who had his dependence upon Eli, behaved with so much modesty and simplicity, and who was unable to discern between the voice of God and that of his tutor, would be more terrible to Eli than the declaration of the prophet.* And he said, It [is] the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good; *humbly acknowledging God's sovereignty, and submitting to the sentence with a penitent heart.*

19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, *and revealed more and more of his mind to him,* and did let none of his words fall to the ground; *they were all like an arrow that falls not short, but hits the mark.* 20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel [was] established [to be] a prophet of the LORD, *both by Eli's testimony, by repeated revelations made to him, and by some of the declarations being remarkably accomplished: he was to be a constant prophet, to supply the place of Urim and Thummim when the ark was taken away.* 21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD. *God often revealed himself to him, not by dreams or visions, but by an audible voice. He was the first prophet, since Moses, who was raised up to be a public instructor and governor.* See Acts iii. 24.

REFLECTIONS.

1. This chapter teaches us, that the younger should be subject to the elder; that children and servants should pay due respect to their masters and instructors. How humble and diligent was Samuel! ready to rise out of his bed at every call of Eli; and was very careful and tender of him. Children should honour their aged and weakly parents; and servants do all they can for the ease and comfort of those whom they serve: and learn from this pious child, that their obedience should be ready and cheerful, and then it will be acceptable.

2. We learn, that when God speaks, his creatures should attend. If it be our duty to obey the calls, and attend to the instructions, of earthly masters, much more of the infinitely great and glorious God, whose servants we all are. When reading or hearing his word, this should be our language, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* Let us *hear* and attend to *what the Lord our God will speak*, and then we may hope *he will speak peace to us.*

3. Parents may see the absolute necessity of restraining their children from wicked ways. This was suggested in our remarks on the last chapter. But it is so important, and so much neglected, that it is proper we should be reminded of it again and again; as God thought proper to remind Eli of his crime. If parents see their children *making themselves vile in the sight of God* and all good beings, let them resolutely restrain them, frown upon them, and never connive at sin of any kind, or in any degree, lest they make themselves partakers of their guilt, and bring remediless calamities and destruction upon their houses.

4. We may learn from the example of Eli, a submissive temper of mind under all the dispensations of Providence. When this dreadful threatening was heard, he said, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* He lays it down as a plain truth, *It is the Lord,* a Being of perfect justice, almighty power, and infinite wisdom, who never punishes without a just cause, and in a righteous manner. And then he draws this very proper and satisfactory conclusion, *let him do what seemeth him good.* Not what I think just and fit, who am so ignorant, and have so often erred, but what his perfect knowledge judges

to be best. May we thus accept the punishment of our iniquity, and *bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him.*

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter we have an account of the defeat of Israel; the loss of the ark; and the manner in which the tidings of this sad event were received at Shiloh.

1 AND the word of Samuel, *his prophetical word,* came to all Israel*. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. *They had been quiet near forty years, such havock had Samson made among them: but the Israelites now attempted to throw off their yoke, and encamped in the borders of their country.* 2 And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they had joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

3 And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. *They thought the justice of their cause sufficient to secure the divine favour, without considering their character; but now they would have the ark, to which they paid a superstitious regard, and in which they placed an improper confidence.* 4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth [between] the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, [were] there with the ark of the covenant of God †. 5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great

* These words are unnaturally disjoined from the foregoing chapter, they being the proper conclusion of the last verse of it.

† Perhaps they did this in imitation of Joshua's attacking Jericho; but it was contrary to the divine will, who ordered that the ark should be settled, and not moved in Canaan, Deut. xii. 5—11.

shout, so that the earth rang again, *they were heard a great way off; and thought themselves as sure of success, as if the victory was already gained.*

6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, *they were alarmed, believing there was some new accession to their strength, and* they said, What [meaneth] the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. 7 And *when* the Philistines *found what it was, they* were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. *They never heard of the ark before, and imagined the Israelites worshipped it as their God in all their battles, and thought it would produce some extraordinary effects.* 8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these [are] the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. *They had fought with men before, but now they must fight with God: they acknowledge the superiority of the God of Israel to their gods; but, not understanding the sacred story, they thought the plague fell upon the Egyptians in the wilderness; they had general, but confused ideas of the fact: and recovering from their fright, their commander encouraged them, saying,* 9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight *.

10 And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen; *God suffered this, to show them the vanity of their confidence in the ark, and his own displeasure. They fled every man home to their dwellings.* 11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain; *thus began the judgment of God upon the house of Eli.*

12 And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head, *in the habit of a mourner in great distress.* 13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the way-side watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God, *lest it should be taken and abused by the Philistines, and God's people be deprived of the comfort of it.* And when the man came into the

* The Israelites had often been overcome and brought into subjection by them.

city, and told [it,] all the city cried out; *they were loth to tell Eli first, therefore they went into the city, while he sat alarmed and terrified, trembling for their temporal and spiritual interests. At this instant Eli heard a dreadful shriek and lamentation in the city.* 14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What [meaneth] the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli; *they speedily brought the man to give him a circumstantial account.* 15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see; *he could not see the sadness of their countenances, but only hear their cries and lamentations.* 16 And the man said unto Eli, I [am] he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army, *I have been an eye-witness of the battle, and bring you the speediest intelligence.* And he said, What is there done, my son? 17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people; and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and *the worst of all is,* the ark of God is taken. 18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, *it struck Eli to the heart, so* that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy, *and therefore the less able to help himself.*

19 And he had judged Israel forty years. And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, *a pious woman, and of a tender spirit,* was with child, [near] to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her, *from the fright occasioned by these ill tidings she fell into labour.* 20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son; *they thought these tidings would comfort her.* But she answered not, neither did she regard [it,] *so much was she overcome with grief and sorrow;* 21 And, *having recovered a little strength,* she named the child, I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband. 22 And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken. *Alas, for the glory! The loss of the ark oppressed her pious mind more than her personal and domestic troubles.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It is not uncommon for men to pay a superstitious regard to sacred things and ceremonial observances, while they neglect moral duties. These men had a great reverence for the ark; they thought it would do wonders for them, and that there was no danger now that was come. Thus in the present day, men boast of their external privileges, and trust to the rites and ceremonies of religion, while by their sins they are displeasing God, and drawing down ruin upon themselves. They think they shall be saved by a fiery zeal for these things; while humility, piety, and charity are neglected; but the instance before us shows that such expectations will disappoint them. The ark was never designed to be a sanctuary for impenitent sinners. The outside of religion will never save those who are strangers to the soul and substance of it. Let us be cautious, then, not to rest *in a form of godliness*, while we are destitute of *the power*. There are many who have eaten and drank in Christ's presence, to whom he will say, *I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.*

2. Pious souls lay the concerns of God's church very near their hearts, and are deeply affected with its danger and calamities. This was the case with Eli and his daughter-in-law; *his heart trembled for the ark.* Good men are more concerned for the interests of the church, than their own private and secular affairs; they esteem the welfare of Jerusalem as their chief joy; cultivate a public spirit; and their hearts take the alarm when they see iniquity abound. Let us show our concern, by earnest prayer and vigorous endeavours to stand in the breach, to appear on the Lord's side, in support of his cause and interest in the world.

3. We learn, that God's ordinances and presence are the glory of a nation; and to lose them is the greatest loss it can possibly sustain. The ark was the symbol of God's presence, a token of his favour to Israel, and that he dwelt among them. When they lost that, their glory was gone. If a nation provoke God to withdraw from them, to take his ordinances away, to remove his candlestick from them, nothing can be more dreadful. And have we no reason to fear this should be the case with our nation? Are not the gospel and its ordinances despised? Have we not

too many profane priests? Have we not much superstition, and but little devotion? Have we no reason to fear lest God should write upon us, *I-chabod, your glory is departed?* Woe to them from whom God departs! When he goes, the glory goes; and all good things go with him. We have reason to fear, lest he should say to his ministers as he did to Jeremiah concerning Shiloh, chap. vii. 12—16., *Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and to the place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear thee.*

CHAPTER V.

When the ark was taken, one would have thought the Israelites would have attempted to regain it, and lose any thing rather than be deprived of it; but they had lost all their zeal and courage, therefore God does it himself. He shows Israel that the ark could defend itself, and triumph over Dagon the god of the Philistines, and over the Philistines themselves also.

1 AND the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod, *their chief city, which lay near the sea, and where there was a famous temple to Dagon.* 2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon; *they had some reverence for the ark, and would not destroy or abuse it, but brought it to their idol's temple as a trophy of their victory, obtained by the help of Dagon, as they thought.*

3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon [was] fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon and set him in his place again. *When the priests and others came early in the morning to*

worship in the temple, they found their god on the ground, but supposing it a casual thing, they put it up again, and took care to fasten it well. 4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon [was] fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands [were] cut off upon the threshold; *this shows that he was thrown with violence quite to the threshold of the door, and broken to pieces against it;* only [the stump, *or the fishy part,* of] Dagon was left to him*. 5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day†.

6 But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, [even] Ashdod and the coasts thereof. *He destroyed many of them by pestilence, and those that died not, were violently afflicted with emerods, or grievous piles.* See Psalm lxxviii. 66. 7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that [it was] so, *they soon found out the cause, and* they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god. 8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about [thither.] *Having called a council, they resolved that the ark should be removed to Gath, the next city towards the north, supposing the present place was unlucky, or that there was something offensive to the God of Israel there.* 9 And it was [so,] that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts; *the same calamity followed them; many died, and others were grievously tormented.* 10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron, *the next city northward.* And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the

* The upper part of this idol was of human shape, and the lower like a fish, as mermaids are represented. Several ancient writers tell us there was such an idol among the Phœnicians, in which country Philistia was a province. It was the Neptune of the ancients. By this it appeared, that the Israelites were overthrown and the ark taken, not for want of power in their God to deliver them, but as a punishment for their sin.

† This custom continued many ages after, see Zeph. i. 9, and kept up the memory of this event. When any asked the meaning of this ceremony, the answer would be, Bring glory to the God of Israel.

God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people; *not that this was their intention, but they feared this would be the consequence.* 11 So *they held another council, and* they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said *to them,* Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. 12 And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven, *there was a great and sore lamentation, so grievous was their calamity.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We have here a remarkable instance of the folly and stupidity of idolatry. What could be more ridiculous than the conduct of the Philistines, in worshipping a god that could not help himself? Lifting up their hands to him that could not lift up himself. A poor god indeed, that had lost both hands and head, so that he could have neither power nor wisdom to help them! Yet they continued their regard to him; yea, reverenced the very threshold on which he was broke. What monstrous folly! What a lamentable instance of the corruption of human nature, that men should be so besotted! Justly might the Psalmist say concerning idols, *they that make them are like unto them, and so are all they that put their trust in them.*

2. When God's hand is heavy upon wicked men, they try all methods but the right to get rid of their affliction. The Philistines suffered greatly under the hand of God. They sent the ark from one place to another, and this only increased their calamity, spread the contagion, and multiplied the triumphs of the ark. They never thought of returning it, till they had tried every thing else. Thus sinners fret and murmur under their afflictions; they have recourse to company, or pleasure, to some false principle or superstitious practice, but do not return to God. Had the Philistines been led to worship God, it would have been no more than might have been expected; but they sent away the ark, when they should have sent away Dagon, and then the ark would have been a blessing, and not a plague. But sinners abhor the ordinances of God's house, because they give them pain; they neglect his worship, because it galls their consciences; they will not part with

sin. While they are weary of the hand that punisheth them, they still hold fast the cause of their punishment.

3. We see how vain it is to contend with God; for those who oppose him will soon have enough of it; one plague shall come after another. Hence we learn the necessity of making God our friend, who can so easily, and by so many ways, humble the proudest sinner, and the most powerful enemy. *Happy* then, *are those people whose God is the Lord.*

CHAPTER VI.

We have here the dismission of the ark from the land of the Philistines; the reception of it in the land of Israel; and the punishment of the men of Beth-shemesh for their presumptuous curiosity.

1 AND the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. *Finding it brought so many calamities into the city, it was removed into a field. They were desirous to keep this trophy among them, and hoped the plague would cease. But God visited them with another; a prodigious quantity of mice spread over the ground, and destroyed the corn, which was now nearly ripe: then all joined in considering how they might best send it away.* 2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD, *to show our respects to it, and to appease that God to whom it belongs?* tell us wherewith, *with what presents,* we shall send it to his place. 3 And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering. *They had learned that trespass offerings were used among the Jews, and therefore recommended it as an acknowledgment that they had offended the God of Israel by bringing the ark out of their country:* then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you; *we shall thus see whether the plague was occasioned by detaining the ark or not.* 4 Then said they, What [shall be] the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, [according to] the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague [was] on you all, and on your lords. *This was a strange offering which they propo-*

sed, an image of the swellings with which they were afflicted.* 5 Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel, *acknowledge the plague came from him, beg pardon for your fault, and seek help from him;* peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods†, and from off your land. *Some objected to this offering as showing too great respect to the ark, and as too degrading to themselves; but the priests exhorted them to it, saying,* 6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed‡? 7 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: 8 And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold which ye return him [for] a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go. *This was wonderful advice, and one would think could never have been given without a special providence overruling their minds. They heard it was dangerous to look into the ark, or they were afraid of it, and therefore put the offering on the side of it.* 9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, [then] he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that [it is] not his hand [that] smote us; it [was] a chance [that] happened to us. *If the kine draw the cart without struggling, and go straight forward to Beth-shemesh, the first place in the land of Judea on the borders of the Philistines, and do this contrary to their natural instinct, having left their calves behind, then God's hand hath smitten us, otherwise it is a chance that hath happened to us.*

10 And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: 11 And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods. 12 And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, [and] went along

* It was customary among heathen nations, to consecrate to their gods such monuments as showed the nature of the evils from which they were delivered. The Indians to this day, when they go to their idols for a cure of their diseases, carry a figure of the member afflicted, either in gold, silver, or copper, according to their ability.

† They had other gods besides Dagon, and it is probable all the idols in the land were thrown down and broken.

‡ This proves that they had a general acquaintance with the history of the Israelites, and how wide the knowledge of Jehovah was spread by those miracles.

the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside [to] the right hand or [to] the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh. *Thus they sent the Israelites this monument of their shame and punishment, and of the triumph of the God of Israel over them.* 13 And [they of] Beth-shemesh [were] reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see [it,] *especially coming in such a wonderful manner, without any conductor.* 14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where [there was] a great stone*: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD. *They thought the cows and the cart were proper to be used on this extraordinary occasion, and they made a sacrifice of the whole as a burnt offering to God, probably on an altar of earth.* 15 And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that [was] with it, wherein the jewels of gold [were,] and put [them] on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD. *They put the ark to rest upon the stone, and feasted together on the peace offering, as a token of their joy.* 16 And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen [it,] they returned to Ekron the same day, *and reported what they had seen. Probably their plague was stayed, but they were not reformed; they thought Jehovah greater than their gods, but worshipped them still.* 17 And these [are] the golden emerods which the Philistines returned [for] a trespass offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one; 18 And the golden mice, [according to] the number of all the cities of the Philistines [belonging] to the five lords, [both] of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great [stone of] Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: [which stone remaineth] unto this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite†.

19 And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD‡, even he smote of the people

* This was probably the boundary between the Israelites and Philistines; it was a territory belonging to the priests, (Joshua xxi. 16.), who were set apart to take care of the ark of God.

† The trespass offerings were according to the number of their cities, and each contributed to furnish them. The stone remained when this book was written, as a memorial of this great event.

‡ The ark was held in great veneration; even the high priest was to see it but once a year, and then through a cloud of incense; yet these men ventured not

fifty thousand and threescore and ten men*: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten [many] of the people with a great slaughter. 20 And the men of Beth-shemesh, *acknowledging their rashness*, said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God, and to whom shall he go up from us? *We are not worthy of his presence, and all people will fear to have the ark among them.* 21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, [and] fetch it up to you; *they said nothing of the miraculous manner in which it came, nor the destruction of their townsmen, but seemed to wish it gone that they might be safe.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE execution of divine vengeance upon sinners should be recollected by us, to prevent our rebelling against God. The wisest part of the Philistines' conduct, is their arguing from the plagues brought on Pharaoh. This story, with many others in the bible, are recorded *for our instruction.* God's judgments on impenitent sinners were intended that we might *hear and fear, and do no more wickedly.* Let us endeavour to learn by other men's experience, for this is the cheapest and best kind of knowledge.

2. Though the enemies of God's church triumph for a while, he will at length overrule all its affairs for his own glory. The ark was in disgrace a long time, but here we see it came back in triumph, accompanied with lasting monuments of the Philistines' disgrace, and the glory of the God of Israel. The church often shines brightest after it has been under a cloud. God can *cause the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain.* This should encourage us when we have the darkest prospects of affairs, for he can easily overrule the schemes of his enemies, for the honour and security of his cause.

only to gaze upon it, but to look into it; either to see whether any thing was taken out, or to see the tables written with God's hand, or some other sacred monuments. The priests should have known better, but they were severely punished.

* This translation is very unlikely, for it was but a village and many were left to lament it. I apprehend it should be rendered, *he slew fifty out of a thousand*; being fourteen hundred in all who indulged this curiosity, God was so merciful as to slay only a twentieth part, or seventy out of fourteen hundred. It was an ancient custom when great numbers were capitally convicted, to decimate them, or take every tenth; but God took only every twentieth. Dr. Kennicott observes, that the original number of the men here destroyed, for looking into the ark, was not fifty thousand and seventy, but only seventy: agreeably to the Hebrew MSS. No. 3, confirmed by the authority of Josephus.

3. The return of God's ark and ordinances will be matter of true joy to every true Israelite. It was so to the men of Beth-shemesh; they left their harvest to pay their respect to this symbol of the divine presence. The ark was as glorious on a stone in the field, as in Solomon's temple. May we learn to value the means of grace, and the tokens of divine favour, and *give glory to God,* who continues them to us.

4. Let us learn to guard against a presumptuous curiosity; it cost the men of Beth-shemesh very dear. Let us not be desirous of knowing what God has thought proper to conceal, and be sensible that he has the wisest ends in so doing. Let us not intrude into things that are not seen, remembering, that *secret things belong to the Lord.* Our rule of duty is plain and clear. God is jealous of his honour and the dignity of his institutions; and therefore it becomes us to pay the greatest veneration to every thing which belongs to him; and to *serve him* always *with reverence and godly fear;* for *our God is a consuming fire.*

CHAPTER VII.

We have here an account of the settlement and continuance of the ark at Kirjath-jearim; the reformation of the people; their deliverance from the Philistines; and some further good services which Samuel did for Israel.

1 AND the men of Kirjath-jearim *received the message that was related in the last chapter, and cheerfully and without fear* came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill*, and sanctified, *or set apart,* Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD; *not to offer sacrifices, for there was no altar or tabernacle here, that was at Shiloh; but to take care of it and guard it, and attend any pious Israelites who came to pay their devotion there.* 2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. *It was there in the whole about forty-six years, but it was*

* Here it was fenced in, and preserved from profanation, but was visible at a distance, that pious worshippers might direct their prayers to it; and in this place it was kept till David's time.

twenty years before the Israelites took much notice of it. And then, being oppressed by the Philistines, and turned out of their cities, they began to lament their apostacy from God, his absence from them, and to entreat his return.

3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, [then] put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. *No doubt Samuel had often advised them to do this before, in a more private manner; but now, when he found some good impressions on their minds, he called them together to strike in with them, to explain to them the nature of repentance, and the condition of their receiving divine mercy; they must put away from their houses and their hearts all strange gods and goddesses, and prepare themselves by serious consideration and firm resolutions, and then they may depend on success.* 4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only; *there was a general reformation in the worship of God, they destroyed their images and altars and served Jehovah alone.* 5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD, *that he may accept your repentance, strengthen your resolutions, and give you deliverance from your enemies. He thought public prayer most honourable to God, and most useful to them.* 6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured [it] out before the LORD, *to denote their grief and deep repentance, and that if their heads were waters, and their eyes fountains of tears, all would be too little to mourn for their aggravated guilt;* and *they* fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh; *took upon him the office of a judge from this time forward; to determine differences, instruct them in the law of God, and punish notorious idolatry.*

7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel; *suspecting that they were forming some scheme to throw off the yoke, they intended to come and surprise them.* And when the children of Israel heard [it,] they were afraid of the Philistines, *because they were unarmed and unprepared, though they were never better prepared than when fasting and praying.* 8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines; *being afraid and*

ashamed to pray themselves, they desire Samuel to continue his prayers for them, that God would save them according to his encouragement.

9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered [it for] a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD*: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel, and the LORD heard him *while praying, and answered even before the lamb was consumed.* 10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel†. 11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and, *taking up the arms which the Philistines threw away in their flight,* smote them, until [they came] under Bethcar, *a strong garrison. Thus Samuel's prophecy of their success upon their repentance, was fulfilled. Compare* Ecclus. xlvi. 16, 17. 12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set [it] between Mizpeh and Shen, *he set it up as a memorial of this victory, gained in the same place where they had been vanquished by the Philistines, and the ark taken from them,* and called the name of it Eben-ezer, *that is, the stone of help,* saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us, *expressing thankfulness for past deliverances, and hope that he would go on and complete it.*

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. *They did not return while Samuel was judge alone; but in Saul's time they returned again.* 14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines; *they recovered their rights and cities, except a few strong holds where the Philistines kept garrisons.* And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites; *the other inhabitants of Canaan durst not stir against them when the Philistines were subdued.*

15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life, *partly alone, and partly with Saul.* 16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places, *making up differences, teaching the law, and punishing offenders.* 17 And his return [was] to Ramah; for

* Though Samuel was not a priest, yet, being a prophet, this was allowable upon such an extraordinary occasion.

† According to Hannah's prophecy, there was thunder and hailstones; and Josephus says, an earthquake, so that they fled with great precipitation.

there [was] his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD. *God having not yet declared where the ark should be fixed, when the people came to consult about important affairs and seek direction, it was proper to do it by sacrifices, as* ver. 9.; *thus he supported religion and the worship of God.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is a happy thing to see those who have apostatized from God, and been indifferent to him and religion, begin to be sorry for their sins, and to return to him. Israel had lost the ark many months; when it returned, it lay in obscurity on the borders of the Philistines; only a few ventured to pay their respects to it; but at length a national reformation took place; and they began with lamenting their folly, and inquiring how they must return unto the Lord. An happy time indeed was this to Israel! And nothing can be more agreeable to a pious mind, than to see those who have forgotten God, and lived without him, been insensible of his presence, and unconcerned about his glory and favour, beginning with grief and concern to inquire after him, and to be uneasy till they have recovered his favour. Would to God this were more frequently seen in our days! and that one and another were *asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards.*

2. If we desire to be approved of God, and to obtain his favour, our repentance must be sincere and genuine; we must prepare our hearts, by close reflection on our past conduct. We must think on our former ways; turn from every sin; particularly from that *which most easily besets us.* We must dismiss every idol that has twined about our hearts. We must not tolerate any known sin, but renounce every one. *No man can serve two masters.* Without this we shall only affront God, injure ourselves, and make our condemnation the more aggravated.

3. National deliverances ought solemnly to be commemorated, and the glory of them given to God. Samuel's raising these stones, suggests to us, that care should be taken to perpetuate the remembrance of signal appearances of providence in our favour; and though God does not answer by thunder and lightning, or in any extraordinary way baffle our enemies, still it is his doing; and we should celebrate his praises, and be careful to remember his works, as a motive to serve him faithfully, and improve the privileges and blessings that he continues to us.

4. How happy was Israel under the government of such a pious, active, generous man, as Samuel was, who administered justice so faithfully; who took so much pains to travel through the land of Israel, to promote righteousness and peace; and who kept up the public exercises of religion. We should esteem it an happiness that we live under a good government; that we have judges who go their several circuits and judge our Israel; and that we have the means of religion continued among us. These are great mercies, and God should be acknowledged as the author of them. We should earnestly pray for judges and magistrates, that they, like Samuel, may be able men, men of truth, *fearing God, and hating covetousness.*

CHAPTER VIII.

The Israelites, on account of the ill government of Samuel's sons, petition to have a king: God directs Samuel how to act; who faithfully tells the people what they must expect from one; but they obstinately persist in their determination.

1 AND it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel; *he found the labour of going the circuits was too great, therefore he appointed his sons to be his deputies, and fixed them in the southern parts of the land.* 2 Now the name of his first born was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: [they were] judges in Beer-sheba. 3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment, *they behaved wickedly, through covetousness and the love of money.* 4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, *to remonstrate in a respectful manner concerning their grievances,* 5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. *This was a very foolish conclusion; for though Samuel was old, he was as fit to counsel and govern as ever; and had he known his sons did ill, he would no doubt have chosen others in their place. But the chief reason was pride; a poor prophet, in a mantle, was too mean for them; they wanted more pomp and magnificence, officers, and a guard, and to make a figure among the nations.*

6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us, *as it was ungrateful to him, after all the deliverances they had received through his means.* And Samuel prayed unto the LORD *for direction what to do in this case.* 7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. *Samuel was displeased, but God told him that He had more reason to be so, for they had in fact rejected him as their king; he had acted as such in times past, making their laws, choosing their governors, directing in all difficult cases, making war and peace, and thus ordering all those things which in other states were left to their king. Thus it appears that their government was a theocracy.* 8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee, *it is their old way; they have chosen other gods to worship, no wonder they now want another ruler.* 9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice, *let them have their own way, and a king like the nations about them:* howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them, *what difficulties and slavery they may be brought into; that they may be without excuse, and have no one to blame but themselves*.*

10 And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. 11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint [them] for himself, for his chariots, and [to be] his horsemen; and [some] shall run before his chariots; *they should not be treated like free-born subjects, but be made guards and footmen, to look after his horses, and run before his chariots.* 12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and [will set them] to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. *He will have military officers higher and lower, and will set them to plough and reap his corn when they should be in their own fields, and set them all to hard labour of one kind or another.* 13 And he will take your daughters [to be] confectionaries, and [to be] cooks, and [to be] bakers; *employ them in servile work without any wages, or only such as he pleases,*

* They had not sense enough to ask for a wise and good king, but one *like the nations* about them, who were all arbitrary princes, and such a one they should have.

and in places where they will be likely to be ensnared and corrupted. 14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, [even] the best [of them,] and give [them] to his servants; *take your estates by force, and give them to his hungry courtiers and favourites.* 15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give *it as a salary* to his officers, and to his servants. *This was a heavy burden, as a tenth also was given by the law of God to the Levites.* 16 And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put [them] to his work, *whatever became of their own, and however that was neglected.* 17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants; *you shall lose the liberty and privilege of free-born Israelites, and live in a servile and slavish condition. As they would be like the nations in grandeur, so they should be like them in misery; and all this was fulfilled, for they had many bad kings in Judah, and not one good one in Israel.* 18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day, *but justly leave you under the heavy yoke ye have chosen for yourselves.*

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; *they cared not how Samuel himself resented it; they would have a king, be the consequence what it would.* 20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. *God had fought their battles under Samuel and the former judges, and always with success; but now they cast off God's care.* 21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. *The Lord knew all this; but Samuel did it for his own vindication, and as a foundation for his prayers.* 22 And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city, *God will give you a king in his own time. Indeed it appears from the law of Moses that God intended to give them a king, and had they waited a little longer they would have had a good one; but now he left them to their own hearts' lusts, and they suffered sufficiently for it.* *See* Hos. xiii. 10, 11.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Let us reflect, with sorrow, on the degeneracy of the children of good and useful men. Samuel had been employed to deliver a threatening message to Eli, and had seen the calamities of his family; and we might conclude from hence, as well as from the temper he expresses, that he took good care in the education of his own children. He no doubt prayed with them and for them, and set them a good example; but they did not follow it, they forsook the good way; power and authority spoiled them. Being too soon their own masters, and having the oversight of others, corrupted their morals. Instances of this melancholy nature we often see or hear of. Samuel's sons perhaps behaved well, or else they had never been made judges. Thus many children, who begin well, and who promise fair, when they get abroad from under the eyes of their parents, become vicious, and *the companions of fools.* Preferment and power have spoiled multitudes, who in inferior stations might have kept their integrity. Parents should learn from hence, to keep a watchful eye over their children; especially in that dangerous time of life, when they are setting out in the world. They should not entertain too sanguine hopes of them; but follow them with their instructions and prayers wherever they go.

2. Let not good magistrates and ministers wonder that they are treated ill, or even rejected and affronted; since God himself often is so. God tells Samuel he must not think it strange and hard that he was rejected, for Jehovah himself was so; this was a reason why he should bear such ingratitude and obstinacy patiently. God bears wonderfully with such provocations, therefore we can have no reason to complain. Rather let us *commit our cause to him,* who (as appears from the instance before us) interests himself in the indignities offered to his servants and prophets; and will repay their labours of love, though men should reject them ever so much, and treat them ever so ill.

3. God desires not the misery of his creatures, but would have them to be comfortable and happy. He was willing to let this people know the power of a king, before he would change their form of government. Thus he deals with sinners; before he gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, he gives them fair warn-

ing what will be the issue of their desires and pursuits, he *sets life and death before them;* he lets them know the worst, so that if sinners perish, they have none to blame but themselves. This deserves thankfully to be owned, as an instance of divine compassion and mercy; and it should deter sinners from pursuing evil ways, and lead them to repentance.

4. See the great misery of an arbitrary and tyrannical government. We have reason to be thankful that ours is not such. This is the way of heathen kings; this is the way of some who are called christian kings; they invade the liberty and property of their subjects, and make sport with their lives. What a wretched land must such an one be! Let us bless God for our liberty and safety; that our properties are secure; that our children are not torn from us by violence; that we can eat of the labour of our hands, none making us afraid. This is owing to the care and goodness of God to us. Let us be thankful for our freedom as Britons; for our good constitution; for wise and righteous princes. *The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.*

5. See the great folly of an obstinate, untractable spirit. They would have a king at all adventures, though they knew what sort of a one he would be; they would indulge their pride, at the expense of their liberty. Strange infatuation and stupidity! They knew not when they were well; were not sensible of their happiness; and forgot all the miracles that had been wrought for them. They would have a king, with all the pomp and grandeur of an eastern monarch, imagining this would be a greater honour to them than a theocracy. This is the case with sinners, *they will not have this man to reign over them.* They choose the world and the flesh for their sovereigns, though they are hard masters; their government is terrible, and their wages is death. They choose without thought and reflection, and so, as in the instance before us, their sudden resolves and hasty conclusions made work for long and bitter repentance. *Let not sin reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

6. How foolish and miserable must they be, who imitate bad examples because they are numerous! The Israelites would have a king like other nations; they would not be singular and differ from them, though their singularity was their glory. Thus men *follow a multitude to do evil;* though there is no readier way to sin and ruin, than doing so, and choosing that which is the way of the world. Those that share in their sins, must share in their

plagues. May we guard against a disposition so fatal, and yet so common. Let us dare to be singularly pious, and steady in our adherence to God, *though all men should forsake him.* Let this be the determinate resolution of each of us, let others do what they will, *as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*

CHAPTER IX.

We are now entering on the history of Saul. We have in this chapter an account of his family, and the circumstances that brought him to Samuel; also of what passed between them, and Samuel's intimation of the divine will to Saul.

1 NOW there was a man of Benjamin, whose name [was] Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power, *of great courage and strength, rather than substance, though the tribe of Benjamin had a very considerable inheritance, the whole being divided between six hundred men.* 2 And he had a son whose name [was] Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and [there was] not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward [he was] higher than any of the people, *a very personable, tall, and handsome man*.* 3 And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses; *probably Saul had the care of them; they were valuable creatures, and a considerable part of their substance. Kings and great men used to ride upon them.* 4 And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found [them] not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and [there they were] not; and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found [them] not. 5 [And] when they were come to the land of Zuph, *the country where Ramah lay,* Saul said to his servant that [was] with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave [caring] for the asses, and take thought for us, *lest we should be lost, or some evil have befallen us.* 6 And he, *that is, the servant,* said unto him, Behold now,

* Heathen writers celebrate kings for those qualities. The Lacedemonians fined one of their kings for marrying a woman of low stature, lest they should not have kings but only kinglings to reign over them.

[there is] in this city a man of God, and [he is] an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go. *The servant had only heard all this by common fame; he knew nothing of Samuel himself, and therefore proposes to go to him**. 7 Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, [if] we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and [there is] not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we? 8 And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver, *about sevenpence half-penny of our money:* [that] will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way. 9 (Beforetime in Israel when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for [he that is] now [called] a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.) 9 Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; Come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God [was†.] 11 [And] as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here? 12 And they answered them, and said He is; behold, [he is] before you: make haste now, for he came to-day to the city; for [there is] a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place; *probably some peace offerings or thank offerings; after which there was a feast at the hill, where the tabernacle was, and on the altar that Samuel built; and if they made haste they would meet with him before his sacrifice began.* 13 As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come because he doth bless the sacrifice, *that is, consecrate it to the service of God by prayer and thanksgiving;* [and] afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him *before he goes up to the high place.* 14 And they went up into the city: [and] when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.

* Some think it was a sign of a wicked mind to consult a prophet on such a trifling business; but this is groundless. The prophets were indeed set apart for weightier business; but there are several instances of their condescending to give advice in matters of less importance; and one reason seems to be, that God was willing to keep his people from consulting wizards and idols, the gods of the heathen; and further, by seeing the prophet's words come true in lesser instances, they would be engaged to believe him in greater and more important ones.

† This has been ridiculed by some people, as if the prophet was no better than a conjurer or fortune-teller, who would not act without a fee. But this arises from ignorance, for it was then, and still is customary in the east, never to approach their prince, or priest, or any person of eminence, without some offering. See the case of Saul in chap. x. 27.

15 Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, *that is, had revealed it to him by the soft and gentle influences of his Spirit,* saying, 16 To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him [to be] captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines, *who had now oppressed them for forty years, and often made inroads upon them:* for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me, *I have heard their complaint concerning the oppression of their enemies, and had compassion upon them:* 17 And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people, *or, as the Hebrew signifies, restrain my people with absolute power, as other kings do.* 18 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, *just as he was coming out of the city, without any attendants, or ensigns of honour, just like a common person;* and *Saul* said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house [is?] 19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I [am] the seer; go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to-day, and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that [is] in thine heart; *Saul must first go with him to sacrifice, and feast on the remainder:* 20 And *that he might go cheerfully and have his mind at ease, he adds,* as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom [is] all the desire of Israel? [Is it] not on thee, and on all thy father's house? *All Israel desired a king, and none seemed fitter for it than himself.* 21 And Saul answered *with a deal of modesty,* and said, [Am] not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me? *Perhaps he thought Samuel was only in jest.* 22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which [were] about thirty persons. *It seems that Samuel, knowing of Saul's coming, had prepared this feast to entertain him on the occasion; and to show that he did not envy Saul, he put him in the most honourable place at the table, among the principal persons of the city, and also honoured the servant for the master's sake.* 23 And *as it was customary to have a mess for every guest,* Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. 24 And the cook took up the shoulder, and [that] which [was] upon it, *some-*

thing to render it more agreeable, as a token of respect, and set [it] before Saul. And [Samuel] said, Behold that which is left, *or reserved for thee by my appointment!* set [it] before thee, [and] eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day, *and he might perceive by this intimation of Samuel that what he did was by divine direction. It seems the feast was kept in some building near the tabernacle.*

25 And when they were come down from the high place into the city, [Samuel] communed with Saul upon the top of the house, *of his own house; here Samuel would probably tell him of his own willingness to resign, and of his future advancement.* 26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And *after Samuel had given him some further advice,* Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. 27 [And] as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God, *and that what I do is by divine direction. But he did this privately, that the people might not think it was a contrivance between Saul and Samuel, or that it was Samuel's choice and not God's.*

REFLECTIONS.

As we shall have but little good to learn from the character of Saul, we must make the best of it, And

1. Let young people learn to be diligent, dutiful, and tender of the reputation of their parents. The family of Saul, though in some respects mean, were wealthy; yet this choice young man was brought up to be diligent. He was willing to go after his father's beasts that were lost, and was unwilling to stay longer than was necessary, lest he should grieve him. All young people should desire to be employed, and should consult their parents' interest; be willing to submit to what may seem a mean office, if it be for their advantage; and do nothing that will grieve or make them uneasy, as too many children do, when they run out without their knowledge, or stay beyond the time allowed; it is very ungrateful, and what no dutiful children will do.

2. Learn from the example of Saul, to take advice, even from

inferiors. He paid a regard to what his servant said, because it carried reason with it. He did not bid him hold his tongue, and ask, Who made him a counsellor? Wisdom and piety do not always go by rank and fortune. Servants may see further than their masters; and as their advice should be given with respect and deference, it should be received without any haughty airs; especially when their advice is such as will be of service to our best interest.

3. Let us learn from the example of Samuel, how reasonable and proper it is to bless our meat before we eat it. The maidens told Saul it was Samuel's constant custom to bless the sacrifice, that is, not only to pray over it while it was actually offering, but to bless that part of it which was to be eaten; and the people had so much piety that they would not eat till he came to perform the sacred office. This is a reasonable duty, and we should do it as priests and prophets in our own houses; though it is peculiarly decent for God's ministering servants to do it when they are present. But let none neglect it, nor perform it in a few hasty, muttering words, which have no meaning, and in which those who are present cannot join. God may justly withhold his blessing, when we have not the grace to ask for it; and better not ask it at all, than do it in a trifling or profane manner. *Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving.*

4. There is something very graceful in the manner in which Samuel treated Saul, and resigned the government to him, and it gives us an high idea of the character of this great and good man. Instead of envying Saul, and looking churlishly upon him, he made a feast; honoured him with a chief place; ordered him a choice morsel, and told him the news of his preferment. Truly good men never envy those whom God raises above them. They are not ambitious of honour; and are willing to lay it down when God pleases. Those make an idol of honour, who grudge the promotion of others. John rejoiced concerning Christ, saying, *He shall increase, but I shall decrease.*

CHAPTER X.

In this chapter Samuel anoints and instructs Saul, and gives him three signs; the signs are accomplished; and Saul is appointed king by lot.

1 THEN Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured [it] upon his head*, and *he* kissed him, *in token of his complacency in the divine choice, and of reverence and subjection,* (Psalm ii. 12.), and said, [Is it] not because the LORD hath anointed thee [to be] captain over his inheritance? *to be a commander in war, a deliverer and protector of his inheritance? and in token that this was done by divine authority, he gave him three signs.* 2 When thou art departed from me to-day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son? 3 Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el†, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine: 4 And they will salute thee, and give thee two [loaves] of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands; *it would confirm his faith in the divine appointment when he found himself thus honoured even by strangers, doing him homage as if they had already known him to be the king.* 5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where [is] the garrison of the Philistines‡: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high

* This was a very ancient rite, as appears from Jotham's parable two hundred years before, when the trees went forth to anoint a king. It was a sign that God would pour out upon him some extraordinary measure of his Spirit.

† Beth-el was a celebrated place in Jacob's time, where God appeared to him. The tabernacle and the ark being separated, they were now used to sacrifice in high places.

‡ This was probably Gibeah, (chap. xiii. 3.), a place where pious people used to come on solemn occasions to be instructed, and where there was a college or academy for the instruction of youth in the knowledge of God's law, and to train them up in the exercises of piety.

place, *where they have been to sacrifice*, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy*: 6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. *This was the highest and most convincing assurance that he was chosen by divine authority, he should immediately be assisted to compose hymns to the honour of God, or join in their psalms and melody, which he had never learnt; and be quite another man, have a spirit of extraordinary prudence and courage, and other qualities fit for a king to possess.* 7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, [that] thou do as occasion serve thee; for God [is] with thee; *fear not to undertake any service for the good of Israel, for God will be with thee, and give success against all its enemies.* 8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, [and] to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry till I come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do †.

9 And it was [so,] that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day; *he had no longer the heart of an husbandman, but of a general or prince; and thinks of nothing but fighting the Philistines and delivering Israel. A spirit of wisdom and courage came upon him, which afterwards for his sins was taken away.* 10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold a company of prophets met him, and he prophesied among them, *he sung the praises of God, and spoke of divine things beyond his natural ability.* 11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What [is] this [that] is come unto the son of Kish? *It is strange to see him employed in a way quite different from his education and former course of life.* [Is] Saul also among the prophets? 12 And one

* Prophesying sometimes signifies, not only foretelling future events, but pronouncing in a sublime and edifying manner about divine truths, and preaching to the people. Here it signifies praising God with instruments of music and singing. See 1 Chron. xxv. 3.

† Gilgal was a famous place near Jordan and the twelve stones. Some suppose that he was to sacrifice there seven days; others apprehend this refers to what happened near two years after, see chap. xiii. I rather think it was a standing rule which Samuel gave him, that in all difficult cases he should go to Gilgal, and send for Samuel, who would meet him there, to consult with him, and ask counsel of God; but that he should wait seven days, to try Saul's faith and obedience, and to curb his rash and hasty spirit.

of the same place answered and said, But who [is] their father? *Is it not God who makes prophets, and who can bestow his gifts on any one?* Therefore it became a proverb, *when any man acted beyond expectation,* [Is] Saul also among the prophets? 13 And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place. *This gift was only for a short time, and he then went to the high place to thank God for the honour done him, and to pray for wisdom to manage his trust faithfully.* 14 And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that [they were] nowhere, we came to Samuel. 15 And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you. 16 And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not, *lest he should seem to have been seeking the crown, or they should envy him; and especially as Samuel thought fit to keep it a secret hitherto.*

17 And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh, *the elders and heads of tribes, to commemorate God's former favours to them at the pillar called Ebenezer* (chap. vii. 5.); 18 And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, [and] of them that oppressed you: 19 And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, [Nay,] but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands. *He reminds them of their folly and sin in rejecting God, who had raised them up judges and deliverers; and knowing their disposition to suspect intrigue, or not to submit to his choice, he directs that lots should be cast to know whom God had chosen; he therefore calls them by their tribes and their thousands, every tribe being divided into a thousand, as our counties are into hundreds.* 20 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near *to the place where the lot was drawn, in the presence of their elders and heads,* the tribe of Benjamin was taken. 21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken*: and when they sought him, he could not be found;

* The lot was cast four times; first for the tribe of Benjamin, second for the family of Matri, third for the household of Kish, and fourth for Saul.

he absented himself either because he thought he was unfit, or to escape the envy of his neighbours; and considering the present perilous state of Israel under the oppression of the Philistines. 22 Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither, *probably by the high priest and the ephod.* And the LORD answered, Behold he hath hid himself among the stuff, *the baggage or furniture of the tent.* 23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. 24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that [there is] none like him among all the people? *here is such a one as you wished for; let your own eyes be judges, is he not a brave man, who hath majesty and grandeur in his countenance and stature?* And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king, *or, as in the Hebrew, Let the king live, let him have a long and prosperous reign.* 25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote [it] in a book, and laid [it] up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. *He explained the duties of a king and his subjects; particularly, what was in the law of Moses upon this head, and probably added other particulars.*

26 And Saul also went home to Gibeah, *and lived privately there till God should call him to take upon him the public administration of affairs;* and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched; *some stout, valiant men, whom God inclined to follow him as his life-guard.* 27 But the children of Belial, *some lewd, profane fellows, who hated all government, and perhaps were of some great family who despised the meanness of Saul's house,* said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents, *as was customary to the king, especially at his accession, and in token of their subjection and joy.* But he held his peace, *or, he was as though he had been deaf. This was the effect of the spirit of prudence which was given him; it would have been very impolitic to have begun his reign with an act of severity.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. As this is the first account of the prophets and their companies, we may here reflect upon the wisdom of God in appointing this order of men, and these seminaries for their instruction. We read of several colleges: Bethel, Jericho, Gibeah, and Naioth in

Ramah, of which Samuel was president, and probably founded them. The priests and Levites were appointed to teach the law, and to judge and decide in controversies; but as a great part of their time was taken up about the tabernacle, and as they were perhaps ready to lay too great a stress on those rituals in which they were concerned; therefore prophets were ordained to be a check upon the priests, and to be guardians of the spiritual or moral part of the law; as the priests were of the ceremonial. Prophets were trained up, by a long course of study, temperance and discipline, to be preachers of righteousness; and to receive upon extraordinary occasions the inspiration of the Spirit. God generally chose prophets out of such as were educated in these colleges. The presidents were called fathers or masters. Here, it is generally thought, they studied not only the law, but music, arithmetic, astronomy, and other sciences that qualified them the better for the service of God, and the instruction of the people. This was a very wise institution; let us be thankful that we have such among us; and pray for the schools of the prophets, that from these fountains, such streams may issue forth, as shall *make glad the city of our God.*

2. Those whom God raises up for any service shall be qualified for it: Saul had another heart when he was anointed king. God proportions our abilities to the duties to which he calls us; we have therefore the highest reason to follow the leadings of his providence, and to trust in him at all times; then we shall find, that *as our day is, so will our strength be.*

3. From the different treatment which Saul met with from his subjects, we may reflect upon the different manner in which men are affected towards our blessed Redeemer, God's anointed Son. Some pay him homage, bring him presents, and yield their whole selves to him. It becomes us all to inquire, whether we are among the number of those who are disposed to reverence him; and are become his dutiful subjects. If we are, it is because God hath touched our hearts, and let him have the praise. Others *will not have this man to reign over them;* they despise him, distrust his power, reject his authority. For a while Christ may hold his peace; but he will not always do it; in the end they shall all be brought forth, and slain before him. Remember Christ is God's anointed Son; he has chosen him to reign over us, and to reign for ever. *Kiss the Son,* therefore, *lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.* Psalm ii.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter informs us of the extremity to which the inhabitants of Jabesh were reduced; of their deliverance by Saul, and the confirmation of him in the government, with the consent of all the people.

1 THEN Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead*: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee: *they agree to be his subjects and pay tribute, contrary to the command of God to make no covenant with those accursed nations.* 2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this [condition] will I make [a covenant] with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it [for] a reproach upon all Israel; *a barbarous, reproachful condition, both to themselves and to all Israel, only fit for slaves and cowards to comply with.* 3 And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if [there be] no man to save us, we will come out to thee. *They were afraid Saul could not or would not help them; but they were resolved to try; and Nahash, from a foolish confidence in his strength, gave them time to do so.*

4 Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept, *out of compassion for their brethren, despair of their relief, and fear for themselves; they were relations to them, for the Benjamites had their wives from thence.* 5 And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What [aileth] the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. *After his election* (ch. x. 24.) *he retired again to his private capacity, till some fit opportunity offered itself for him to assume the throne and royal dignity; in the mean time the management of affairs was left to Samuel.* 6 And the

* This city lay beyond Jordan, on the borders of the Ammonites. It had formerly been destroyed, and had but few inhabitants. The Ammonites had proclaimed war against them before this, which was the reason why they desired a king, see ch. xii. 12. Probably they had now heard that some were disaffected to Saul, and were in hopes that Israel would not help them, therefore they make an attack upon this place.

Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. *He found a strong impulse on his mind, and great courage and resolution to act like the king of Israel. He was angry at Nahash, at the mean spirit of the people of Jabesh, and at Israel's weeping.* 7 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent [them] throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent; *as the sight of the eyes affects more than a bare report, he accompanied his threatenings with a part of the ox. He adds the name of Samuel, to engage those to come who might not have regarded himself; and God was pleased to possess the hearts of the Israelites with a fear of offending him, so that they came after him.* 8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. *Perhaps Judah is mentioned singly, to show their readiness to submit to a king who was of a tribe much meaner than their own, or because of their precedency in all affairs both civil and military.* 9 And they said unto the messengers that came, *whom they kept till they saw what success they should have,* Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To-morrow by [that time] the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and showed [it] to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. 10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To-morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you, *if help does not come, according to v. 3, the hopes of which they conceal, in order to make the Ammonites more secure.*

11 And it was [so] on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day, *the Israelites on three sides, and the men of Jabesh on the fourth, so that they were completely hemmed in:* and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together. *They gained a complete victory, and thus God established Saul's authority. The inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead remembered and requited this kindness long after,* ch. xxxi. 11—13.

12 And the people said unto Samuel, Who [is] he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. *Samuel attended the army to encourage and animate the Israelites; and the people who had borne the contempt thrown upon*

Saul without any resentment before, now, charmed with his valour and prudence, would have the offenders all put to death. 13 And Saul, *with great wisdom and clemency,* said, There shall not a man be put to death this day, *we will not have a day of joy and triumph stained with severity, or with an act that shall cause mourning among the people;* for to-day the LORD, *in great mercy,* hath wrought salvation in Israel, *therefore let us imitate the divine compassion and goodness.*

14 Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal; and renew the kingdom there. *Samuel seized the opportunity to confirm Saul in the kingdom, and took the people to Gilgal, a place convenient for the inhabitants on both sides of Jordan, in order to renew the covenant between Saul and the people concerning the kingdom, and install him publicly and solemnly into it.* 15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, *owned and accepted him for their king by general consent, and anointed him publicly, which was done only privately before, and performed all other solemnities requisite for his inauguration;* and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly, *gave God thanks for their victory, and the happy settlement of the kingdom.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have in Saul, an example of a good magistrate and ruler. He was diligent in his own private affairs, and concerned for the welfare of Israel. He had, in this instance, courage and resolution, attempered with much mildness. How happy is it when these good qualities meet! How well would it have been for himself and for Israel, if he had continued so; but alas! we shall soon see the contrary.

2. The fear of God is the noblest principle, as it will make men courageous, resolute, and public-spirited, (ver. 7.) The fear of God fell on them, and that induced them to obey the king's summons, pity their brethren, and come immediately to their relief. Religion makes men good subjects, good soldiers, and true friends to their country. Let us cultivate this principle in ourselves, and teach it to our children if we wish them to be public blessings; and if we wish them to *lead quiet and peaceable lives,* we must teach them to *love the brotherhood, fear God, and honour the king.*

3. We see here, how fickle the disposition of mankind is, what little dependance is to be placed on their applause, and how little we should be affected by their contempt. Many despised Saul, and many of those who adhered to him saw him despised without resenting it. But great success made great alterations in the affections of the people; no sooner was he victorious, than every one was for Saul, and against his enemies; every one was the friend of him who prospered in his way. This instance, and many others in the holy scriptures, teach us to *cease from man*, and never to lay any stress on the enjoyment or want of popular applause, for it is easily gained, and as easily lost. Let it be our ambition to secure *the honour which cometh from God*, for *his loving-kindness is better than life.*

CHAPTER XII.

The close of the last chapter left the assembly of the states at Gilgal; Saul was made king by universal consent. Here Samuel resigns the government, and attempts to make the people penitent and religious; he appeals to them concerning the equity of his administration, and sets before them their ingratitude; his exhortations are enforced by a remarkable sign; and they are encouraged to hope in God's mercy if they are not rebellious.

1 AND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. *The people were transported with joy at having a king; they flattered themselves that God was pleased with their request, because he had given them a king, and so signal a victory. Samuel embraced this opportunity to convince them of their mistake, and that this favourable circumstance was not owing to their piety or politics.* 2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you, *to rule and govern you:* and I am old and greyheaded, *and have cheerfully resigned without envy or discontent;* and, behold, my sons [are] with you *as private persons, responsible for any male-administration:* and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day, *discharged my place faithfully, as a Levite, a prophet, and a judge.* 3 Behold, here I [am:] witness against me before

the LORD, and before his anointed, *putting honour upon Saul in making himself accountable to him: then offering himself to be tried, and his whole administration examined, he desires the people to speak freely, without any check or restraint:* Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received [any] bribe to blind mine eyes therewith, *that I should not discern what was right and just; or dissemble as if I did not see it?* and I will restore it you, *and make full satisfaction.* 4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand; *they acknowledge that he had been an upright judge, and had done nothing amiss; they ought to have applauded him for it.* 5 And he said unto them, The LORD [is] witness against you, and his anointed [is] witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, [He is] witness; *they bore this testimony in the presence of God and the king. Thus he vindicated his own character and conduct; showed them their folly in desiring a king; gives a good example and a useful lesson to Saul; and could more boldly reprove them when his own innocence was thus publicly acknowledged.*

6 And Samuel said unto the people, [It is] the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt, *that set them in part of the land, conducted them to Jordan, appointed Joshua to be their leader, and promised them success. He then gives them a short history of God's mercy to them.* 7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers. 8 When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. 9 And when they forgat the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them; *their sin was the cause of all their calamities, and not any defect in the government of their judges.* 10 And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee; *such were their prayers and promises when under affliction. He then reminds them of their deliverance;* 11 And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, *that is, Gideon,* and Bedan, *probably this was Samson,*

*who was a man of Dan**, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. 12 And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God [was] your king. *They would not stay till God raised them up a judge, or a deliverer, or till he commanded Samuel to fight, but would have a king.* 13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, [and] whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. 14 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, *for you are still on your good behaviour,* then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God; *who will be your leader, guide, and protector, and you shall be safe and happy under his care; otherwise your enemies will still oppress you, and your king will not be able to save you.* 15 But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as [it was] against your fathers. 16 Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes, *he will give you a visible demonstration of the truth of what I have said; you shall see it is not the language of a weak old man, but of an inspired prophet.* 17 [Is it] not wheat harvest to-day, *a fine, clear day, when there is no likelihood of rain? and, what you know is not usual at this season,* I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness [is] great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king; *that you may see God's power and knowledge, and his displeasure against you, and that he could as easily punish you as he did the Philistines by thunder; thus you will see your folly in rejecting him and his prophets, who have such interest with him.*

18 So Samuel called unto the LORD: and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel; *they feared lest God should indeed destroy them, and that Samuel would not intercede for them; therefore they earnestly beg his prayers.* 19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not, *lest the fruits of the earth be utterly destroyed, and our persons consumed:* for we have added unto all our sins [this] evil,

* It was common to have two names, one of which was taken from the place they came from, or some other remarkable circumstance.

to ask us a king. *They were not sensible of this before, but now they are brought to repentance and humble acknowledgment of their guilt.*

20 And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your hearts; *do not despair of recovering the divine favour:* 21 And *this is the best and only way of doing it;* turn ye not aside *to idols:* for [then should ye go] after vain [things,] which cannot profit nor deliver; for they [are] vain, *mischievous, and destructive, are not able to save you, and will expose you to the displeasure of God.* 22 For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, *his honour would suffer, as if he was unfaithful or unkind: it is not for any merit in you, but all of God's free grace and mercy,* because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. 23 Moreover as for me, *though I have been highly disobliged, and ill requited, yet* God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way, *I will pray for and direct you as long as I live.* 24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with *all* your heart, *with diligent care and steadfast resolution, otherwise all my prayers and instruction will answer no end:* for consider how great [things] he hath done for you, *consider his great goodness in not rejecting you, but setting a king over you.* 25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, *neither my prayers, nor Saul's courage, will be of any avail, for* ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn from hence, that it is our duty to behave in such a manner, as that we may be able to appeal to God and men for the integrity and unblameableness of our conduct. This should be the care of all, more especially of those in superior stations, as magistrates, ministers and parents. Let us *herein exercise ourselves, to keep a conscience void of offence;* and when we come to review life, we shall have comfort in ourselves and the approbation of others. A good conscience makes a man confident; he dares put himself upon trial, and challenge all the world. To have the good word of our neighbours, that we have lived honestly and soberly in the world, will be our comfort under contempt and slights, which old people, when their days of service are over, too

often meet with. Let our whole conduct be so open, fair, and good, that we may be able at the close of life to say, with the apostle, *Ye are witnesses, and God also is my witness, how unblameably I have walked among you.*

2. It is a duty we owe to ourselves, to our own comfort and usefulness, to vindicate our reputation and to keep a good name. Samuel knew his own private failings, but was willing his public conduct should be cleared and vindicated, and the testimony of Israel to it gained. This was very different from courting esteem and begging applause. As a good name is valuable, and better than great riches, we ought to be solicitous about it, and endeavour to roll away every reproach which may be thrown upon it, to remove every suspicion and aspersion, and to *finish our course with* honour, as well as with *joy.*

3. Let us not conclude any way to be right because we prosper in it. The Israelites had a king given them at their request; but in that their wickedness was great, and their request displeased God. If men increase their fortunes by indirect ways, by oppression, fraud, smuggling, gaming, and the like, it is no argument that these things are lawful, or that God will connive at them. Providence may seem to smile upon practices which the law of God forbids. Therefore let us look well to the principles on which we act, and the ends we pursue; and see to it that the means be upright and justifiable. God may grant our request, but send along with it leanness and a blast. In his anger he may make the greatest *prosperity of fools to destroy them.*

4. The calamities we have passed through, and the deliverances afforded us, should be remembered by us to promote our humiliation and gratitude. If we recollect what sins we have committed, what dangers we have been surrounded with, what deliverers have been raised up, we shall find that God has done great things for us in answer to our prayers; that we have reason for humiliation on account of our sins, which have exposed us to God's displeasure, and on account of our small improvement of his favours; and for thankfulness for the kind appearances of providence for us; for God's prophets, who remind men of these things, and reason with them about them as reasonable creatures, capable of thinking, reflecting, and judging. Let us never forget the goodness of God to us in these instances.

5. Though men should disoblige us and treat us ill, we are to do them all the good in our power, as Samuel did. We should abhor the thought of returning evil for evil, and of neglecting any

method of doing good to those by whom we have been neglected or slighted. To neglect prayer for the happiness even of our enemies, and those who despise us, is a sin against God. Good men are afraid of sins of omission, and christians are under peculiar engagements to *love their enemies, to bless them that curse them, and to do good to them that despitefully use and persecute them;* and thus, *not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

6. We learn, that *righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people.* The drift of Samuel's farewell sermon was, to impress this upon the minds of the people; to engage them to serve God and obey his voice. Let this be our care, as Britons, to obey the divine law, to manifest in our own conduct, and to promote in others, public virtue; *to serve the Lord in truth and righteousness.* This, in the natural course of things, secures prosperity, and obtains the blessing of heaven. And if this be not our character, we shall be consumed; the wisdom of our administrations, the courage of our princes and commanders, will all be vain; our government will be a blessing to us, if we are obedient to God; otherwise, our destruction will be inevitable. Thus Samuel exhorted the Israelites; and it will be our duty and interest, to cultivate practical religion and serious godliness, as the only way to secure the continuance of national blessings and the salvation of our own souls. *The Lord will be with you, while you are with him; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever.*

CHAPTER XIII.

In this chapter we have the beginning of a war between the Israelites and Philistines; Saul's trespass, and Samuel's reproof of him; the insolence of the Philistines; and the weakness of Israel.

1 SAUL reigned one year, *it was one year since he was chosen king by the Lord in Mizpeh; he was the son of a year, as in the Hebrew; the day of his inauguration being considered as his birth day:* and when he had reigned two years over Israel, 2 Saul chose him three thousand [men] of Israel; [whereof] two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent; *these were sufficient for his guard, and to keep the country in peace.*

3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that [was] in Geba, and the Philistines heard [of it.] And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. *This is the first time we read of Jonathan, whose character was very amiable, both as a warrior and a friend. Though the Philistines were subdued by Samuel, yet they still kept some garrisons. The first step to rid the country was to get possession of these. Jonathan began. The Philistines declared war: and Saul sent messengers through Israel to inform them of this victory, for their encouragement, and to summon them to Gilgal, where Samuel had appointed a rendezvous.* 4 And all Israel heard say, [that] Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and [that] Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots*, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which [is] on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

6 When the men of Israel, *who had no chariots or horses,* saw that they were in a straight, (for the people were *greatly terrified and* distressed) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits; *this was very cowardly, considering their late success against the Ammonites.* 7 And [some of] the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead, *eastward, the Philistines were in the west.* As for Saul, he [was] yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling *at the sight of such a prodigious army before them.*

8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel [had appointed,] (ch. x. 8.) but Samuel came not to Gilgal *till towards the latter end of the seventh day*; and the people were scattered from him, *when they saw Samuel did not come to advise on this dangerous situation. He delayed his coming till the last day, to try Saul's faith and patience.* 9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. 10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, *and before he began to offer the peace offering,* behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

* Both the Syriac and Arabic copies say three thousand chariots; and this seems more likely than thirty thousand. Nor were these three thousand all fighting chariots, but probably carriages for the baggage and to take away the plunder they expected.

11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? *an expression of concern and resentment for his disobedience to God's orders.* And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and [that] thou camest not within the days appointed, and [that] the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; 12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. *Saul here makes a very poor excuse. He saw his soldiers deserting, and apprehended that Samuel might be prevented from coming; he therefore ventured to offer a sacrifice, though much against his own inclination, lest the enemy should come and attack them before he had made satisfaction to God. The burnt offerings were attended with prayer, they were a kind of humble supplication.* 13 And Samuel said to Saul, *by his prophetical authority,* Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee, *it was not my command, but the command of Jehovah, that thou shouldst wait for me:* for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, *that is, for a long time, as the word often signifies, so long as thou and thy posterity shall continue.* 14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue *in thy family:* the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him [to be] captain over his people, because thou hast not kept [that] which the LORD commanded thee *.

15 And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin: and Saul numbered the people [that were] present with him, about six hundred men, *and these had no swords or spears with them, only bows, or slings, or clubs, the rest of his company had fled for fear,* ver. 6, 7. 16 And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people [that were] present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. 17 And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way [that leadeth to] Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: 18 And another company turned the way [to] Beth-horon: and another company turned [to] the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim

* This was only a conditional threatening; God would do so, if he was not more obedient for the future; and this appears by Samuel's going along with him to his place of abode. He had charged Saul with acting foolishly; this might have been forgiven; but in chap. xv. 23—26., we find he was absolutely rejected for disobedience; and is there charged, not only with folly, but presumptuous rebellion.

towards the wilderness, *the Philistines sent out three parties to ravage the country.* 19 Now *the reason why they made these inroads so easily was, that* there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make [them] swords or spears: 20 But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his ax, and his mattock *. 21 Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads, *when they were grown blunt, that they might be fit for agriculture. There was plenty of brass and iron in Canaan, but they were forced to work at the Philistines' forges.* 22 So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that [were] with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found. *To introduce the story in the next chapter, it is here added,* 23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash, *that they might hinder them from attacking the garrison; here they lay in a convenient pass, and were ready to attack the Israelites if they ventured out.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We see how ill men sometimes judge for themselves, and to what straights they are brought when they will have their own way, and not follow the leadings of Providence. The Israelites would not have God and Samuel to govern them; they thought a king would do wonders; that nothing could stand before him. But here we see them in a wretched situation, flying and trembling under great dread and slavery. Samuel had no need of such weapons as swords or spears, thunder and lightning had been his; from which even their king could not save them. Now they saw, or might have seen, their vain confidence. They needed God's help as much as before. May we learn to *trust in the Lord with all our hearts, and not lean to our own understandings.*

2. We learn, that all breaches of the divine commands are folly, and such as nothing will excuse for. Saul would be thought very prudent in securing his soldiers from division, and very pious

* This was during their oppression in the times of the judges, (2 Kings xxiv. 14., Judges v. 8.), Porsenna obliged the Romans by covenant, to use no iron but for tillage.

in sacrificing before he went out to battle; but his conduct was wicked, for he disobeyed God's commandment. Men sometimes think themselves wise and politic, while they act contrary to the law of God; but it is the height of folly, especially in those who think to substitute prayer, or any external performances, or ceremonial observances, instead of obedience to *the weightier matters of the law*. Nothing is more foolish than to imagine that God will be pleased with services directly contrary to his orders, and in disobedience to his commands. *A good understanding have all they*, and they only, who *fear the Lord, who do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.*

CHAPTER XIV.

We have in this chapter an account of Jonathan's success against the Philistines' garrison; the successful attack on the body of the Philistine army; with Saul's rash adjuration, and the bad consequence it was attended with, to Jonathan and the people.

1 NOW it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that [is] on the other side *the valley*. But he told not his father, *lest he should hinder the project. He was justified in doing this, as he had a general commission to fight the enemy.* 2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which [is] in Migron, *where he had pitched his tent:* and the people that [were] with him [were] about six hundred men; 3 And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, I-chabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod, *and the ark also was there.* And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone, *as he went away in the night.* 4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, [there was] a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one [was] Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh; *here the garrison was so defended that there was no way of coming at them but by climbing one of these.* 5 The forefront of the one [was] situate northward over against

Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah. 6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised, *who are strangers to the covenant of God:* it may be that the LORD will work for us: for [there is] no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few, *it is equally easy to his almighty power.* 7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I [am] with thee according to thy heart, *I am resolved not to forsake thee, be the expedition ever so hazardous.* 8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto [these] men, and we will discover ourselves unto them *at the break of day.* 9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. 10 But if they *challenge us to advance, and* say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this [shall be] a sign unto us. *Probably he had desired of the Lord that this might be the sign, and God inspired him with so much resolution and faith as to depend upon it.* 11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves, *through fear or want of food, in the bottom of the rocks.* 12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer *with mockery and contempt,* and said, Come up to us, and we will show you a thing, *come if you dare, we will make you pay dear for your attempt.* And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. 13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him, *by some difficult way out of the Philistines' view, and coming upon them behind, surprised them:* and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him, *they made great slaughter among them. The Philistines were terrified when they saw it was Jonathan, who had smitten one of their garrisons before.* 14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, [which] a yoke [of oxen might plough.] 15 And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling*. 16 And the watchmen of

* Some of the garrison flying to the army which lay encamped on the side of the hill, threw them into great confusion, thinking that an army was coming

Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, *were flying and scattered all around;* and they went on beating down [one another,] *destroying one another, not distinguishing friends from foes.*

17 Then said Saul unto the people that [were] with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer [were] not [there]. *Jonathan was soon missed, but Saul thought he would not go without a body of men to support him; and supposing there was a skirmish between the armies, he wanted to know where they were engaged, and what was to be done in the case; he therefore consulted the high priest.* 18 And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel. 19 And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that [was] in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand. *He stopped him in the middle of his service, thought the case was plain enough, as there was confusion in the Philistine host; and he resolved to arm immediately and pursue them. Thus he at once discovered his hypocrisy and profaneness.* 20 And Saul and all the people that [were] with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow*; [and there was] a very great discomfiture. 21 Moreover the Hebrews [that] were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp [from the country] round about, even they also, *either through fear or compulsion,* [turned] to be with the Israelites that [were] with Saul and Jonathan. 22 Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, [when] they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle; *the cowardly Israelites came out of their holes and hiding-places, and fell upon the flying enemy.* 23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven; *though there were other instruments used, yet their salvation was of the Lord.*

24 And the men of Israel were distressed that day *with hunger*

against them. The circumstances were aggravated beyond the truth, as is usual in such cases; and they suspected treachery among themselves. The earth, quaked. It is uncertain whether this was real, or only a figurative expression for a tumult; but certain it is they were all struck with a panic.

* There were various confederate nations, or tribes, in the army, who did not know one another amidst their confusion and terror.

and faintness, for want of proper food for refreshment: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed [be] the man that eateth [any] food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. *He solemnly declared in the name of God, that the man should be put to death who stayed to take any food; a rash and foolish oath:* So none of the people tasted [any] food. 25 And all [they of] the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground; *either a hollow tree, or a cleft in the rock was full of honey, which fell on the ground, so that the land flowed with it.* 26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath. 27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath; wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that [was] in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; *he ignorantly transgressed this absurd law, and with the end of his spear gathered up some honey and eat it;* and his eyes were enlightened, *he was refreshed and invigorated, his spirits and strength were restored, and his eyes brightened.* 28 Then answered * one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed [be] the man that eateth [any] food this day. And the people were faint, *so that they could not pursue their victory so vigorously and effectually, as otherwise they might have done, yet forbore to take any food.* 29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to-day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines? *would they not have pursued them more swiftly, and done more execution among them?*

31 And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon, *quite to their own borders:* and the people were very faint, *through Saul's foolish prohibition, or they would have pursued them further.* 32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew [them] on the ground: and the people did eat [them] with the blood, *either raw or half dressed, contrary to the law of Moses; this was in the evening, when they returned from the slaughter.* 33 Then they, *that is,*

* In Hebrew, one is said to *answer*, when the speech relates to what was done as well as to what was said.

some who were more conscientious than the rest, told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day, *to slay the beasts upon, that their blood may run from them.* 34 And Saul *directed his officers to give notice of this, and* said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay [them] here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew [them] there.

35 And Saul built an altar unto the LORD, *to offer sacrifice and give thanks:* the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD, *or, as in the margin, that he began to build; for he did not finish it, being in too great a hurry: this was another evidence of his neglect of God and his worship.* 36 And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them, *hoping to come upon them while sleeping and cut them all off.* And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God; *the priest remembering Saul's former error and rashness, would have him ask counsel of God.* 37 And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day. *This was to show Saul that there was guilt somewhere, and to convince him upon the whole of his rashness and folly, which caused Israel to sin, hindered the prosecution of the victory, and exposed his own valiant son to death.*

38 And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day, *which hath provoked God to deny an answer.* 39 For, [as] the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But [there was] not a man among all the people [that] answered him. 40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee. 41 Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect [lot.] And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. 42 And Saul said, Cast [lots] between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. *God permitted this, to discover Saul's hypocrisy, who did not fear a rash oath and a tyrannical adjuration, yet would slay his son for a sin of ignorance only; but thus Jonathan was justified, and*

Saul's folly made manifest. 43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that [was] in mine hand, [and,] lo, I must die. *This showed great honour and courage; he does not censure his father, or plead his own service, or innocence; but generously submits to the sentence, only acknowledges it to be hard; but Saul, with violence and fury, swears he shall die.* 44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. 45 And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: [as] the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day, *by his help and assistance; therefore he shall not die.* So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. 46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines, *this ruffle prevented his prosecution of the victory;* and the Philistines went to their own place.

47 So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, *and ruled with greater authority than he did before,* and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, *on the east,* and against Edom, *on the south,* and against the kings of Zobah, *in Syria, on the north,* and against the Philistines, *in the west,* and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed [them;] *he kept them under, but did not quite subdue them; that was left for David.* 48 And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.

49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchi-shua: and the names of his two daughters [were these;] the name of the first born Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: *he had also Ishbosheth and other children, but they were young, and did not accompany him in his wars.* 50 And the name of Saul's wife [was] Ahinoham, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host [was] Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. 51 And Kish [was] the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner [was] the son of Abiel. 52 And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him, *to prefer him in the army, which was the custom of the eastern kings.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We may infer hence, that the almighty power of God should be an encouragement to his people under every difficulty. Jonathan encouraged himself by the consideration, that *nothing was too hard for God.* When in the way of duty, and undertaking services to which Providence calls us, we should not despair because our strength is small. Though the friends of God and religion are few in number, and their enemies very numerous, yet he is able to make them victorious. Let us firmly believe this, and apply it in every particular circumstance. Let us cheerfully rely upon the power of God; this will be likely to silence vain fears, *to raise up the hands that hang down,* and animate all our petitions.

2. When God hides his face from us, and denies an answer to our prayers, we should inquire the cause. Saul, as little as he knew of religion, saw the necessity of this. Let us find out where the sin lies; and then we may be assured that *God's hand is not shortened that he cannot save, nor his ear heavy that he cannot hear.* But our iniquities will *separate between us and God;* and if we desire our prayers should be heard, we must avoid sin, and put it away from us, for *if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.*

3. We may learn from the whole of this chapter, what a miserable creature he is who hath no rule over his own spirit, whatever dignity and eminence he may arrive at in the world. Let men of rash and hasty spirits see, what a wretched figure even a king of Israel made, when under the influence of such a temper. What a mixture of jarring passions was there in his heart! these made him a terror to himself. What a mixture of religion and hypocrisy! Asking advice of the Lord, and stopping in the middle of the service; calling the priest, then restraining him; making a rash oath, and keeping it; swearing in a most unbecoming manner, and acting like a fury who had lost humanity and all natural affection. May we all learn to govern our passions and appetites, and to guard our tempers, that nothing rash, inconsiderate, or revengeful be found in them. Especially should those who know themselves to be naturally warm and hasty, be careful to set a double watch over the doors of their lips. It would have been much more for Saul's honour to have governed his passions,

than to have conquered the Philistines, for, as Solomon observes, Prov. xvi. 32., *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city.*

CHAP. XV. 1—23.

We have here Saul's expedition against the Amalekites; and the sentence passed upon him by Samuel for his partiality and disobedience; after this, Samuel executes Agag, and retires from Saul.

1 SAMUEL also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee [to be] king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD; *Samuel reminds him of the great obligation he was under to God, that he might be more careful and cheerful in obeying his commands, and not run into farther errors.* 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, *who has an absolute command over universal nature, and is the disposer of all creatures and all events,* I remember [that] which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid [wait] for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt, (Exodus xvii. 8—16.). 3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass*. 4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah: *Judah is distinguished because it was the royal tribe. It had the privilege of going first, and the Messiah was to come out of it.* 5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, *the chief city, where the king resided,* and laid wait in the valley.

6 And Saul said unto the Kenites, *most probably by Samuel's direction,* Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the

* This king and his people had been cruel and bloody enemies to God's Israel, and therefore deserved to be destroyed for their own sins. See v. 18., where it is said, *Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites.* The measure of their iniquity was now full, and they were grown ripe for the execution of their long threatened punishment. God directs Israel to do this execution on a people who had used them and their fathers so barbarously; if any among them were righteous, God would make an equitable distinction in a future state, as he does in the case of all national calamities, which come immediately from his own hand.

children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt*. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites; *some into the rocky part of the country, see* Numb. xxiv. 21., *the others into the tribe of Judah; for we read of them afterwards under the name of Rechabites.*

7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah [until] thou comest to Shur, that [is] over against Egypt, *through their whole country; but some of them escaped, for we read of them afterwards in David's time.* 8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword, *all that came in their way,* ch. xxvii. 8., xxx. 1. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, *either out of foolish pity or covetousness, thinking to get a large ransom for him,* and *also kept* the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all [that was] good, *such as money, jewels, &c.,* and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing [that was] vile and refuse, *not worth keeping,* that they destroyed utterly. *Saul was the chief counsellor, and all the people agreed to do this to enrich themselves thereby.*

10 Then, *before Saul returned from his expedition,* came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, 11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul [to be] king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. *The meaning is not, that God was sorry for what he had done, because he did not know the consequences beforehand; but he would act as men do when they repent, he would treat Saul in a different manner, revoke his favours, and lay him aside.* And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night, *beseeching him to pardon Saul.* 12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, *a monument of his victory, to his own honour and not to God,* and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal *in great pomp, with Agag and the good things of the Amalekites in triumph.* 13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed [be] thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. *Saul begins, wishing him all happiness from God, thanking him for the service he had done him in sending him on such an honourable expedition,*

* The Kenites were the descendants of Jethro, an ancient friend to God's people. They had not been guilty of the sins of the Amalekites, and being shepherds, they lived in tents, therefore could easily remove.

and boasts of his performance, without being sensible of his fault. 14 And Samuel said, What [meaneth] then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? *Surely this is an evidence of guilt, not consistent with your profession of obedience.* 15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen; *he lays the fault on the people, when he had the chief hand in it; but urges that they did it with a very pious design,* to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God, *whom thou lovest and servest, and therefore undoubtedly thou wilt be pleased with this;* and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. *This looks as if Saul was confident of his own righteousness, and fully satisfied with his own achievement; he no doubt hoped to hear himself commended, and never expected this thundering lesson.* 17 And Samuel said, When thou [wast] little in thine own sight, [wast] thou not [made] the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? *He reminds him of his low beginning, and the humility and modesty he formerly expressed.* 18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, *an honourable expedition,* and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, *like a ravenous bird or beast, and take the accursed thing like Achan,* and didst evil in the sight of the LORD, *who can easily see through all thy pretences.* 20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. *With the greatest insolence he gave Samuel the lie, while he in effect confessed what Samuel charged him with.* 21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal; *he again lays the blame upon the people, who he says did it with a good intention, to sacrifice to God, though it is probable neither he nor they had any such design.* 22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? *a question this which Saul could not dispute; the sacrifices were intended to promote obedience, to be the means of religion, obedience was the end.* Behold, to obey [is]

better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams, *than the best and most costly sacrifices.* 23 For rebellion [is as] the sin of witchcraft, *that is, divinations or enchantments, which were contrary to the law of God, and looked upon as renouncing him;* and stubbornness [is as] iniquity and idolatry, *that is, the iniquity of idolatry.* Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from [being] king, *as idolaters were to lose their lives, so Saul his kingdom.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE hence learn, that the judgments of God will, sooner or later, come upon wicked men; especially those who are enemies to God's church and people. He bore long with the Amalekites; but when their iniquity was full, he executed his righteous vengeance upon them. The sentence against evil doers is not always speedily executed; yet judgment will surely come; and the longer it is delayed, the heavier it will fall. Divine justice, though sometimes slow, is always sure.

2. We see that it is a dangerous thing to associate with God's enemies. The Kenites would have suffered greatly by living among the Amalekites, if they had not had timely notice to withdraw. This should be a caution to us against keeping wicked company, and forming alliances with those who have no religion. God has given us warning to *come out from among them, and be separate;* and if we do not, we are in danger of partaking of their sins and their plagues. Solomon hath said, that *a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

3. See from hence what a dangerous thing the love of the world is. They spared the beasts in direct violation of the divine command: covetousness seems to have been at the bottom of all. We see too many instances of this; men are obedient to God where nothing is to be lost by it, but are ready to disobey him when any temporal advantage is to be obtained. *The love of money is the root of all evil; which some having coveted after, have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* This was Saul's case.

4. It is no uncommon thing for men to boast of piety, when they are notorious transgressors of God's commands. How proudly and impudently does Saul boast of his obedience, because, he had done part of his duty! So men think themselves

very good, commend themselves, and lift up their faces with confidence to God's ministers, because they have some good qualities, because they are not idolaters, or have opposed the enemies of religion, or have destroyed what was vile. They have parted with some sins, to which they had little or no temptation, and with which they could dispense without loss or reluctance. But the best of the sheep and oxen, the things that are dear to them as a right hand or a right eye, these they are unwilling to be without. They live in the breach of some of God's laws, and yet boast, and are confident, of their goodness. But their boasting is a very bad symptom, and a mark of hypocrisy; for true obedience is always joined with humility, and low thoughts of ourselves. If men are really as pious as they pretend to be, *what mean these bleatings*, these sinful indulgences, this worldly spirit, these ungoverned passions, this love of pleasure and vanity? They should remember, that rebellion is as great a sin as witchcraft, and stubbornness as idolatry. But wicked men will distinguish where there is no distinction, and serve God in that manner only, and in what instances they please; and thus *they are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

5. See how prone men are to lay the fault upon others, when themselves are principally, if not only, guilty. This was Saul's case; the people were scarce blameable at all, or else Samuel would have reproved them; what they did was by Saul's direction, and yet he endeavoured to throw the blame upon them. This is too often the case with confident men; they are ready to censure any body, rather than *take shame to themselves.* It is to be feared this is too much the disposition of men in general; the descendants of the first transgressor are apt to adopt his language, *The woman which thou gavest me tempted me, and I did eat.* This proves the inward conviction men have, that sin is a real evil, because they are so unwilling to own it, and so forward to censure and condemn others.

6. It concerns all to attend to that important truth of an inspired prophet, that *obedience is better than sacrifice;* and that rebellion against a known command of God, is a most heinous crime. Humble, conscientious obedience, is better than all sacrifices. Exactness in ritual observances and ceremonial forms, is nothing without a holy life: this is the main thing. Our Lord refers to this passage when he would convince the pharisees that *God loveth mercy better than sacrifice.* The end is better than the means. Prayer and sacrifices are good things in themselves,

but piety, justice, and charity, are the end. And lest any should imagine that positive commands may be safely neglected, while they obey moral precepts, let them consider, that *rebellion is as witchcraft and idolatry.* Refusing to obey the true God, is as bad as serving a false one. From hence it follows, that to neglect baptism and the Lord's supper, which are expressly commanded by our Lord, though they are only positive institutions, (that is, depend on the will of the lawgiver), is rebellion, as well as fraud, drunkenness, and idolatry. And it is to be wished that those who live in the neglect of the Lord's supper would consider this, for Saul was rejected for disobeying a plain command of the Almighty.

CHAP. XV. 24, to the end.

We have here Saul's fruitless humiliation; Samuel's execution of the divine sentence against Agag; and the parting of Saul and Samuel.

24 AND Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice: *this was a ridiculous excuse, because the people were at his command; and in several instances before recorded, he seemed to stand in no awe of them.* 25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me *to Gilgal,* that I may worship the LORD *there, and that thou mayest pray for me, and assist me in imploring forgiveness of God.* 26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel; *Samuel, according to his present view of things, peremptorily denied his request, lest he should seem to approve or allow what he had done.* 27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, *in great indignation, at discovering so much meanness and hypocrisy in a king of Israel, Saul thought the people would imagine he was greatly under God's displeasure, and therefore* he laid hold upon the skirt of his, *Samuel's,* mantle, and it rent. *This casual rent was a proper emblem of Saul's rejection.* 28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, [that is] better than thou.

29 And also the Strength of Israel, *who is not weak, like men, and therefore can execute all his purposes, or rather, who giveth victory to Israel,* will not lie nor repent: for he [is] not a man, that he should repent*. 30 Then he said, I have sinned; [yet] honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. *He now acknowledges his guilt without excuse or alleviation, and submitted to his sentence; but desired, while he was king, that he might not lose the honour and submission of his subjects, and he was chiefly concerned about this.* 31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD. *Samuel probably did this by divine direction, lest the people should withdraw their obedience if they saw him quite rejected.*

32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites, *he spoke to the people before Saul, that he might see what he ought to have done.* And Agag came unto him delicately, *effeminately, both in his dress and walk.* And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past; *being spared by Saul and his soldiers, he thought there was no danger from an old prophet, and that he would only reprove him.* 33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. *This shows that he had been a cruel, bloody tyrant.* And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal: *he ordered him to be executed on the spot, as Elijah did Baal's prophets,* 1 Kings xviii. 40.

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. 35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death, *he saw him afterwards accidentally, but probably nothing passed between them:* nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, *he had so much pity for him and love for his country, that he continued to lament the condition of both:* and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel, *that is, he changed the manner of his dealing with him, and all Samuel's prayers and tears could not reverse the sentence.*

* God is said to repent, when he alters his dispensations as men alter their conduct. But he cannot repent, as that denotes weakness and imperfection, and want of sufficient knowledge. There was no room for it in this case, because he had declared the Amalekites should be destroyed, and confirmed it by an oath; so that Saul's breaking the command of God in this case was the highest affront to him.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How hard is it to bring men to a sense of their guilt, and to acknowledge their crimes! What poor subterfuges does Saul shelter himself under! How many idle excuses, when his guilt was so glaring! Thus do the children of disobedience run from one excuse to another; and it is really melancholy to see, as we often do, especially ministers, when they visit sick and dying persons, how backward men are to acknowledge those evils which all the world besides can see. The pride of their hearts hath deceived them, and there are no words uttered with more difficulty than these, *I was mistaken, I have done evil.* But let us *not be deceived, God is not mocked; he that hideth his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them, shall find mercy.*

2. God is just and righteous, and will not alter his threatenings against the wicked. *The Strength of Israel will not lie or repent.* His threatenings indeed are conditional; if men persist and continue impenitent, they will be executed; but if they repent, the Lord will pardon. He is not weak, so as to forget sin; he is not fickle to alter his mind; nor feeble, so as to be unable to execute his threatenings: his sentence upon impenitent sinners is irreversible; and those who abuse his long-suffering goodness, *will find* at last *no place for repentance, though they should seek it carefully with tears.*

3. We see that sinners are more solicitous about their own credit and honour, than of God's acceptance. We never find in Saul any marks or fruits of genuine repentance, and very little concern to regain the favour of God; but he was extremely loth to lose his credit with his people. He expressed great respect for Samuel, merely to save appearances before them. Thus men often seem zealously affected towards God's ministers, and desire to be at peace with them and the church, merely for the sake of their own reputation and interest. They want to be honoured before the people, while they seek not peace with God. What wretched folly, hypocrisy, and self-deceit! when God is the judge, the master of every one, by whose sentence he must stand or fall. Let all *labour* then *to be approved of God,* and *to secure that honour which cometh from him only.*

4. The hearts of good men are greatly pained and grieved at the wickedness of others, and especially persons of distinguished rank and dignity. How earnestly did Samuel pray for Saul all night, when he heard of his wickedness; how affectionately did he mourn for him when he was rejected! Undoubtedly he was very much concerned at his losing the kingdom; more especially on account of his losing the favour of God, and exposing himself to future misery. Every good man's heart is pained when sinners destroy themselves; especially those who have received signal favours from God, and have been advanced to distinguished honour. They are grieved when men forsake God, and are forsaken of him. Let us labour to affect our hearts with the misery of the wicked, and though, like Samuel, we refrain from their company, when we see it is in vain to give them any advice, and though they never mourn for themselves, let us pity and pray for them, *if peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth,* that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord.

CHAPTER XVI.

We are now entering on the history of David, who was an eminent saint, a valiant hero, an inspired prophet, and the sweet psalmist of Israel; he to whom we are indebted for the most excellent part of our public devotions. We have in this chapter an account of his being anointed king, and the manner in which he was introduced to court.

1 AND the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? *Samuel had retired from Saul, and was employed in training up prophets in the school under his care. He knew it was in vain to mourn, but he appeared to be much concerned lest Saul should die suddenly, and there should be no one to succeed him; therefore God said to him,* Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons; *one very different from Saul, who shall fulfil all my will.* 2 And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear [it,] he will kill me, *he will be greatly enraged at his rejection.* And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say,

I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. *This Samuel was used to do from place to place, to keep up the worship of God, and to prevent the increasing wickedness of Israel.* 3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, *to feast upon the peace offering, as friends and neighbours used to do,* and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me [him] whom I name unto thee; *so shalt thou be preserved from danger.* 4 And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, *lest he came to denounce some judgment against them; or to shun Saul's displeasure, and so it might be dangerous for them to entertain him, as* chap. xxi. 1., and *they* said, Comest thou peaceably? 5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, *by washing and other legal purifications, also by meditation and prayer,* and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. *After the sacrifice he went home with Jesse, while the feast on the peace offering was getting ready, and acquainted him with his business; then Jesse called his sons to pass before him one by one.*

6 And it came to pass when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed [is] before him. 7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, *by secret suggestion,* Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for [the LORD seeth] not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these. *This proves that he had made Jesse acquainted with the business.* 11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all [thy] children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep. *Jesse thought it was not likely the youngest should be chosen, therefore he did not send for him till Samuel ordered him.* And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. 12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he [was] ruddy, *or red haired, which was counted a great beauty among them,* [and] withal of a beautiful countenance, *or of fine eyes,* and goodly to look to, *something very amiable and sweet in his countenance; and these natural charms were probably height-*

ened by a modest blush when he appeared before Samuel. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this [is] he. *This choice of David was evidently the immediate act of God, for Samuel and Jesse had both judged wrong.* 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren, *rather from the midst of his brethren, in private; because he was desirous to keep it a secret, lest his elder brethren should envy him:* and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward, *a spirit of prudence and courage, a public spirit; qualifications fit for a prince. Probably Samuel explained the meaning of this ceremony as a designation to the kingdom after Saul's death, but not till then,* 2 Sam. ver. 2. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. *He grew melancholy, had violent fits of phrensy, and strange agitations of body and mind: his disorder might be chiefly natural, arising from vexation and pride, and an evil spirit might take the advantage of it to make him more melancholy, and sometimes more furious.* 15 And Saul's servants, *or courtiers, perceived it, and* said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. 16 Let our lord now command thy servants [which are] before thee, to seek out a man, [who is] a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well*. 17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring [him] to me. 18 Then answered one of the servants, *who wished to introduce David to the court,* and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, [that is] cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, *Saul would like him the better for this,* and prudent in matters, *fit to stand before Saul, who in his fits might say and do many extravagant things that were proper to be concealed,* and a comely person, *proper to be about the king's person,* and the LORD [is] with him, *he is remarkably favoured by Providence.* 19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which [is] with the sheep. 20 And Jesse took an ass [laden] with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent [them] by David his son unto Saul, *as a token of homage, respect, and allegiance.*

* Music is known to have a natural tendency to assuage the passions and compose the mind. It was celebrated for this among the ancients; and it is observed, that those who love music, are generally good-tempered, calm, and gentle.

21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him; *Saul finding him to be such a one as was represented, promoted him to a place of considerable honour,* and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. 22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. *He desires Jesse's consent that he might continue with him: this was a token of great kindness, that he would not keep him without his father's consent.* 23 And it came to pass, when the [evil] spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand*: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him; *he had some lucid intervals, the tumult of his thoughts were composed, and he was fit for the business of his station.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We learn, (what cannot be too often inculcated) the necessity of solemn preparation before we engage in religious exercises: and though we are not required to use ceremonial observances, yet we must prepare our hearts by meditation, prayer, and serious consideration, and get rid of other cares, that we may *wait upon the Lord without distraction.* This is necessary, to render our services comfortable to ourselves, or acceptable to God through the Redeemer.

2. We must reverence and fear that God who looketh into the heart, and discerns the temper and principle, the affections and thoughts. Samuel, though a wise and good man, was deceived in Jesse's elder sons. If we trust to outward appearances, we shall often be deceived. But let us always remember, that *God searches the heart;* he knows who will best fill up particular stations, and often fixes on those persons who to us seem most unfit; and rejects others, who appear most likely; but at length it will appear that we were mistaken. Let this be a caution to us to guard our hearts; to see that we act upon right principles, and for good ends, *for God cannot be deceived.* We learn also, to judge of others by their tempers and souls, and not by outward appearances; to value those most, whose minds are most holy, whose tempers are kind and obliging; not those who are only eminent for a comely countenance or height of stature; and

* Josephus tells us that he added psalms and hymns, which had a good effect upon Saul.

who, like him whom Samuel thought the Lord would choose, are proud, surly, and passionate.

3. How miserable is that person from whom the Lord is departed, and his Spirit withdrawn! When the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul he was in a sad condition, grew fretful and revengeful; sometimes melancholy, sometimes mad and outrageous. There is not a more pitiable creature on this side hell, than the man who is forsaken of God, and given up a prey to his own heart's lusts. No one needs a worse punishment, than to have his own passions let loose upon him, and the restraints of divine grace taken away. May we learn therefore highly to value, and diligently to seek and cherish, the influences of the good Spirit of God; to guard against every iniquity, especially wilful rebellion and disobedience; for this will provoke God to take away his Holy Spirit; and no dignity or power can secure the possession of it. May we learn to consider the displeasure of God, and the absence of his good Spirit, as the greatest of all evils; for thus saith the Lord, Hos. ix. 12., *Woe also to them when I depart from them!*

CHAPTER XVII.

In the former chapter we had an account of David being at court; here we find him in the camp. Goliath challenges the armies of Israel; David accepts the challenge, and gains the victory; upon which Saul inquires particularly about him.

1 NOW the Philistines *took advantage of Saul's lunacy and incapacity for business, and* gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which [belongeth] to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim, *or the coast of Dammim.* 2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. 3 And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and [there was] a valley between them.

4 And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, *one of the Anakims who fled*

from Joshua, (see ch. xi. 22.), whose height [was] six cubits and a span, *more than three yards.* 5 And [he had] an helmet of brass upon his head, and he [was] armed, *or clothed,* with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat [was] five thousand shekels of brass, *or about a hundred and half.* 6 And [he had] greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. 7 And the staff of his spear [was] like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head [weighed] six hundred shekels of iron, *about twenty-five pounds:* and one bearing a shield went before him. 8 And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set [your] battle in array? [am] not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. 9 If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. 10 And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together, *and by single combat decide the day.* 11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid, *there was not a man that durst look him in the face; even Jonathan was dismayed, and found no impulse to attack him; this work was reserved for David.*

12 Now David [was] the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-judah, whose name [was] Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men [for] an old man in the days of Saul, *and was therefore excused from going to war.* 13 And the three eldest sons of Jesse went [and] followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle [were] Eliab the first born, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. 14 And David [was] the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul. 15 But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Beth-lehem, *Saul's fits being now over and his fever become constant.* 16 And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days. 17 And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched [corn,] and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; 18 And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of [their] thousand, *that he might show them favour, and not put them upon any desperate service,* and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge, *bring a token that they are alive and well.* 19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, [were] in the

valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines, *or skirmishing, and ready to fight.*

20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, *or place of the carriage,* as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle: *he found the army drawn up, the Philistine champion vapouring as usual, and saw the panic into which the Israelites were struck.* 21 For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army. 22 And David left his carriage, *the provisions he had brought to his brethren,* in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. 23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words *as before, v.* 8., and David heard [them.] 24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid. 25 And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, [that] the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel, *from all taxes and customs.* 26 And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? *he inquires more particularly into the reward that was to be given, and then adds,* for who [is] this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? *He was not so much moved by the reward, as by zeal for God and his covenant.* 27 And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. 28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, *he was moved with envy and jealousy,* and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. *This was very unkind language, imputing his coming there to nothing but curiosity and pride; and intimates, that he was more fit to tend a few sheep, than to fight a giant.* 29 And David *returned a very mild answer, and* said, What have I now done? [is there] not a cause? *had I not reason enough for coming here, when my father*

sent me, and for making this inquiry, when Israel's army and God are defied?

30 And he turned from him towards another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner. 31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed [them] before Saul: and he sent for him. 32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. 33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou [art but] a youth, and he a man of war from his youth; *out of kindness to David he would not have him to venture his life.* 34 And David, *with great dignity and humility,* said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: 35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered [it] out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught [him] by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. *David encouraged himself by three arguments,— his success against these beasts, the uncircumcision of the Philistine, and that he had defied the armies of the living God; therefore he assured himself of success.* And *when* Saul *found him to be a man of so much courage, resolution and faith, he* said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

38 And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. 39 And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved [it.] And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved [them;] *not having been accustomed to them, they were rather an incumbrance than an help to him.* 40 And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling [was] in his hand: and *to show that he did not fear him,* he drew near to the Philistine. 41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield [went] before him. 42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was [but] a youth,

and ruddy, and of a fair countenance; *he expected to have met some tall, robust person; but finding a youth coming, who was not like a warrior, but amiable rather than terrible, he thus addressed him,* 43 And the Philistine said unto David, [Am] I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods, *prayed Dagon and Ashtaroth to destroy him; a circumstance which David no doubt considered as a token for good.* 44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. 45 Then said David to the Philistine, *in the most noble, courageous and pious language,* Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear, *or any human force:* for the battle [is] the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands; *it is the Lord's cause, and he will make it successful.* 48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh, *stalking on with state and insolence,* to meet David, that David hasted, and *while the Israelites were pitying David, and the Philistines despising him, he* ran towards the army to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang [it,] and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth; *the beaver of his helmet, or that part which covers the forehead, was probably turned up in scorn, and fearing no danger to that place, God directed the stone there.* 50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but [there was] no sword in the hand of David. 51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled; *they did not throw down their arms and become servants to Saul, as Goliath had promised, but ran away.*

52 And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, *David probably leading the way,* until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the

wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron; *great multitudes were destroyed.* 53 And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.

54 And David took the head of the Philistine, and *after he had showed it to Saul, he* brought it to Jerusalem: but he put his armour in his tent, *and afterwards laid it up in the tabernacle,* ch. xxi. 9. 55 And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son [is] this youth? And Abner said, [As] thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell; *Saul's memory was probably much impaired, and as it was a year or two since David had left the court, he was altered in stature, and now had on his shepherd's dress. Abner might have been from home on some expedition while David was with Saul, and for that reason did not know him now.* 56 And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling [is]. 57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58 And Saul said to him, Whose son [art] thou, [thou] young man? And David answered, [I am] the son of thy servant Jesse the Beth-lehemite, *and laid the head of his enemy at his feet.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. How worthy of imitation by all young people, is the humility and modesty of David. He seemed glad to be dismissed from court, that he might retire to a plain private life; though he knew what God intended him for. He did not appear to be fond of pre-eminence, but was content in an humble station, till God should call him out to a more public and honourable one. Let young people learn, that humility is the greatest ornament, and the best preparative for advancement in the world; above all, that it is the way to secure the favour of God; who *resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.*

2. We see the folly and wickedness of a proud, envious spirit. With what pride, ill-nature, and rudeness did Eliab treat David! but this was a sure sign of a base, cowardly spirit. He chode and trampled upon him, as if unworthy of his notice. It is to be feared this is too much the case with many elder brothers, who think they have a right to domineer over the younger. Men

of proud, envious spirits, often run into indecent language, indulge groundless jealousies, and censure very unjustly. It should be our care to guard against this temper, and honour virtue and merit wherever we see it. Let brethren especially be kind, obliging, and affable one to another.

3. We learn, *not to render railing for railing.* David was undoubtedly displeased at this unkind and unjust treatment, but he kept himself from passion, and with a soft answer *turned away wrath.* Though he had reason on his side, he did not rail, and return the abusive language, but bore it with an excellent temper. We have never more reason to guard our heart and tongue than when we meet with ill treatment and scurrilous language; especially when we are conscious we do not deserve it. David, when ruling his own spirit, was more honourable than when killing Goliath. *He that hath rule over his own spirit,* and shows it *by bridling his tongue, is better than the mighty.*

4. The servants of God ought to take encouragement from former appearances of providence in their favour. How wisely and piously did David argue, that God would deliver him, because he had done so out of the paw of the lion and the bear. He recollected what he had done, that he still had the same power, and therefore trusted that he would do it. So St. Paul reasons, (some think with allusion to this story), *I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion; and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.*

5. We learn from the whole story, that the strong man should not glory in his strength. Goliath, though one of the tallest men that ever lived, proportionably strong, and well armed, was overcome by a contemptible stone from David's sling. This monster, with his armour and weapons, was all brought down at once. How vain is it to boast of strength! What a mean thing to glory in, when life is so precarious, and so easily taken away. Let the enemies of God and his people, who proudly defy him and his armies, see how easily he can pour contempt upon them, and sink their glory in the dust. Let us all remember that piety is the strength and ornament of the man; and while great Goliath's pride and vapouring is brought down, pious, humble David *is the man whom God delighteth to honour.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

We have here David's honour, Saul's envy, and his attempts to destroy David.

1 AND it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul*. 2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house, *but would have him to be always with him.* 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul; *they solemnly entered into a league of perpetual friendship, which extended to themselves and their posterity.* 4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that [was] upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle, *that he might do him honour, and see him habited suitably to the noble exploits he had performed.* 5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, [and] behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, *made him captain of the guards,* and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants; *he had the good-will of Saul, of his courtiers, of the soldiers, and of all the people; but it was still a greater honour that he had grace to bear all this without pride and arrogance.*

6 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, *when he returned from his camp to his palace at Gibeah,* with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. 7 And the women answered [one another] as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands, *in slaying Goliath, and thus making way for the destruction of the Philistines.* 8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him, *his*

* Probably David said something more than we have a particular account of; which might further discover his prudence, modesty, courage, and piety. Jonathan loved him for these excellent virtues, and the services he had done for God, for the king, and for all Israel. A wise Providence intended this for the preservation of David, that he might have a friend at court to intercede for him, to give him notice of danger, and support and comfort him under all his difficulties and ill usage.

angry passions began to rise; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed [but] thousands: and [what] can he have more but the kingdom? *He now suspected David was the person Samuel referred to as his successor.* 9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward, *with envy and malice, and watched to see whether he took any steps to undermine him and gain the throne.*

10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, *his discontented, angry, melancholy disposition, exposed him to the attack of the evil spirit,* and he prophesied in the midst of the house*: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and [there was] a javelin in Saul's hand. 11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall [with it.] And David avoided out of his presence twice. 12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul; *this confirmed his opinion that he was the man designed for the kingdom:* 13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, *employed him abroad in warlike and dangerous expeditions, hoping he might be slain in some of them, or that he should find an opportunity of destroying him privately,* and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. 14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, *there was no fault in his conduct;* and the LORD [was] with him. 15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him; *this increased Saul's suspicion and desire of revenge.* 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them; *all the tribes of Israel, especially that of Judah, loved David. He headed them in all their expeditions, and his prudent conduct, courage, and success gained their affection.*

17 And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles: *Saul was obliged to do this, according to his promise for killing Goliath; but David's humility would not allow him to claim it, now Saul offers it. And can any thing be more kind than to offer him his daughter? or any thing more religious than to wish success to the Lord's battles? yet this treacherous wretch never intended more mischief to David, or more unfaithfulness to God, than at this time.* For Saul said, Let not mine

* The original is, *he made himself a prophet,* or feigned himself to be under a prophetic influence; sung some devout song, and used such signs and gestures as prophets usually did, to lull David asleep, that he might not suspect any danger.

hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him; *he did not care to murder him himself, but would be glad to have him fall by the hands of the Philistines.* 18 And David *modestly answered, and* said unto Saul, Who [am] I? and what [is] my life, [or] my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king? *myself and my family are too mean to expect such an honour, yea, even the hazarding my life cannot deserve it.* 19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife. *The match had been delayed to endear it the more: at length, when his hopes were at the highest, his affections fixed, and the time appointed, Saul broke it off at once; perhaps to raise David's resentment that he might have some pretence for putting him to death.*

20 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in [the one of] the twain, *in the younger, though not in the elder, hoping that she would prove a snare to him, and join to execute a design against his life.* 22 And Saul commanded his servants, [saying,] commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law. *David was not forward to accept the offer, but the courtiers were commanded to urge him to it, by telling him that he had the affection of the king and the people.* 23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you [a] light [thing] to be a king's son in law, seeing that I [am] a poor man, and lightly esteemed? *I am not able to pay a dowry, such as a king might expect. This was the custom of those days, and was to be settled on the wife and her children.* 24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David. 25 And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. *This was a proposal which he thought David could not decline without the imputation of cowardice:* but Saul, *by pretending zeal against the Philistines,* thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days *for the bringing in the foreskins* were not expired. 27 Wherefore David

arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men*; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

28 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD [was] with David, and [that] Michal Saul's daughter loved him, *and had too much affection for her husband to join in his base designs.* 29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David, *because his designs against his life had miscarried, and the way was paved for him to the throne by his being the king's son in law;* and Saul became David's enemy continually, *and every day was more fully bent to destroy him.* 30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth *to revenge the injury David had done them;* and it came to pass, after they went forth, [that] David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by; *he was highly esteemed by all, which raised Saul's passion, and increased his zeal to destroy him.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE see here an affecting instance of the vanity of the world. Who so seemingly happy as David! He returned in triumph. Saul caressed and advanced him, Jonathan the king's son made a league with him, the king's daughter fell in love with him, the courtiers and soldiers esteemed him, and he was beloved by all the people; yet this was the beginning of his sorrows; and innumerable artifices were made use of to destroy him. See what slippery places great men stand in; and what little reason there is to envy their condition. David was much happier when a shepherd, than now. Let us learn contentment in a low condition, and check the risings of ambition. The greater height, the greater danger.

2. See what a malignant passion envy is, and what a demon it turns a man into. Never was Saul's breast so fit a lodging for the evil spirit, as when full of envy. He needed no worse spirit than his own to torment him. The case was, David had behaved well, and the women gave Saul more and David less than he deserved; and yet how does his envy and resentment rise! It is plain that the Spirit of God is departed from men,

* Dr. Wall observes that the Greek version here has only a hundred. Compare *v.* 25., and David's own words, 2 Sam. iii. 14.—ED.

when they can bear to hear no one praised but themselves; when they are jealous and suspicious of every body about them; can resent undesigned affronts, and are peevish and ill-natured in their language. *The wisdom which is from above* is different from this, it *is peaceable and gentle;* but *where envy and strife is, there is every evil work.*

3. Those that behave wisely, and have God with them, ought to be reverenced and loved. The respect which Saul's courtiers and soldiers paid to David was no more than he deserved; even Saul feared him. The way to secure esteem and respect, is to behave ourselves gently. 'Men, (as Mr. Henry observes,) think the way to be feared is to huff, and hector, and threaten; which makes them feared by fools only, but despised by the wise and good. Whereas the way to be both feared and loved, feared by those to whom we would wish to be a terror, and loved by those to whom we would wish to be a delight, is to behave ourselves gently, prudently, and circumspectly, humbly and unblameably. *Wisdom makes the face to shine;* it commands esteem and respect.

4. If David reckoned it such an honour to be Saul's son in law, what an honour is it to be *the sons and daughters of the Most High,* the King of kings! David speaks of the alliance with great respect, though he himself had many deserving qualities. How great an honour, then, have the saints, to call God their father, and to receive the tokens of his love and care; and an heavenly inheritance! If this is a light matter to any of us, we know not the dignity and happiness resulting from it. But every good man will say with John, 1 Epistle, i. 3., *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*

CHAPTER XIX.

David spoke by experience when he said, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.' Here are four remarkable escapes of his from destruction; the first, by Jonathan's interposition; the second, by his own activity; the third, by means of his wife; and the fourth, by the immediate hand of God.

1 AND Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David; *when he could not destroy him by craft, he proclaimed open enmity, and hopes the courtiers would kill him, or at least that Jonathan would, out of regard to his father's authority and his own interest.* 2 But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret [place,] and hide thyself; *when the courtiers found that Saul was fully set against David, none of them durst appear to plead for him, but Jonathan his faithful friend. He informed David of the private orders which had been given, and exhorted him to hide himself immediately.* 3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou [art,] *I will attend him in his morning walk, or to his military exercises,* and I will commune with my father of thee, *I will plead thy cause, perhaps his anger may have abated, and his mind be changed;* and what I see, that I will tell thee, *that if necessary thou mayest escape at once.*

4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works [have been] to thee ward very good: 5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest [it,] and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause*? 6 And Saul hearkened unto the

* What a noble act of disinterested friendship! to plead his cause before his sworn enemy, and a man of such violent passions. He suggested to his father what a sin and a dishonour it would be to slay so faithful a servant, who had hazarded his life and saved a whole nation. There was a great deal of skill and

voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, [As] the LORD liveth he shall not be slain: *but he did not continue long in this good mind.* 7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.

8 And there was war again: and David went out *with his thousand men,* and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him. *This success raised Saul's envy and malice.* 9 And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand, *which were then used for sceptres:* and David played with [his] hand. 10 And Saul, *forgetting his oath, as rash swearers usually do,* sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night. 11 Saul, *having added perjury to his other crimes, his conscience being grown seared and his designs desperate,* also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife, *having intelligence from court, perhaps from Jonathan,* told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain. 12 So Michal let David down through a window: and he went and fled, and escaped *. 13 And Michal took an image, and laid [it] in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' [hair] for his bolster, *or rather, put goats' hair about the head of the image, the better to resemble David,* and covered [it] with a cloth. 14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He [is] sick, *and probably showed them the bed, to prevent their suspicion; and they had so much humanity as not to distress him, but went to inform Saul which gave David more time to escape.* 15 And Saul sent the messengers [again] to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. *He would not wait to see whether his sickness would prove mortal or not, but orders them to bring him, sick or well, that he might have the pleasure to despatch him with his own hand.* 16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, [there was] an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' [hair] for his bolster. 17 And Saul said unto Michal,

delicacy in this address; had he said more of David's merits, it would only have inflamed Saul's enmity; and therefore he chose to select this instance in which Saul had some merit and much complacency, and it had the happiest effect.

* It was now he composed the fifty-ninth psalm, which shows the disposition his mind was in, and may be properly read after this chapter.

Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? *Saul did not expect to be served so by his daughter; but Providence made her, though intended to be his ruin, the means of his deliverance.* And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee? *Here she told another lie, which is no way excusable; though her love to her husband is commendable. Before she behaved like David's wife, but now like Saul's daughter. David was not such an imperious, brutish husband; but she said any thing to turn the edge of Saul's resentment.*

18 So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, *for direction and protection,* and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth. 19 And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David [is] at Naioth in Ramah.

20 And Saul, *forgetting the reverence due to Samuel and the students,* sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, *singing divine songs, and celebrating the praises of God in sublime and rapturous strains,* and Samuel standing [as] appointed over them, *to instruct, moderate, and direct them in their holy exercise,* the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied; *they either forgot David, or their minds were brought into so good a frame that they durst not do so ill a thing.* 21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also, *all were diverted from their purpose.* 22 Then went he *himself* also to Ramah, *(surprising obstinacy!)* and came to a great well that [is] in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where [are] Samuel and David? And [one] said, Behold, [they be] at Naioth in Ramah. 23 And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah; *God showed him beforehand that it was in vain he attempted to take David, whom God defended.* 24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked * all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, [Is] Saul also among the prophets?

* Without his upper garment; so the phrase is used by the sacred writers, and by many Greek and Latin authors.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We may observe, there is no dependance to be placed on a man of ungoverned passion. *A furious man*, saith Solomon, *aboundeth in transgression*. David had every thing to secure him from violence, that would be likely to influence a reasonable man; goodness, merit, great services, affinity; Saul's reason was on his side; he had bound himself by an oath not to hurt him; yet he overlooked and broke through all. There is no trusting to a man's honour, his word, or even his oath, if he has no command over his passions; for he is, in fact, a madman. The fewer dealings, and the less acquaintance we have with such persons, the better. *Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.* Prov. xxii. 24, 25.

2. We see, that the hearts of all men are in God's hand, and he can turn them which way soever he will. He wonderfully over-ruled Saul's contrivances for David's ruin; turned his messengers for a while into prophets, and at length Saul himself also. God's power is not confined to places or persons; he has innumerable ways to confound the enemies of his people, and to defeat their devices. He can manage the hearts and tongues of men so as to make them serve his own purposes. Let this preserve us from the fear of man, and excite us to courage and resolution in the way of duty; for *if God be for us, who shall be against us?*

3. Extraordinary gifts are no proof of true grace. A man may have excellent abilities, both natural and acquired, yea, supernatural endowments, and yet continue ignorant of God and religion. Though Saul prophesied, his heart continued corrupt and unchanged. Hence we learn, not to trust to any gifts whatever, for thus saith the apostle Paul, *Though I have the gift of prophecy*, like Saul, *and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains; though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, or give my body to be burned, and have not charity, I am nothing.* 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3. And our Lord declares, *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name*

have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matt. vii. 22, 23.

CHAPTER XX.

In this chapter David represents his present distress to Jonathan; who upon discovering Saul's wicked disposition, informs David of his danger; upon which they mutually renew their covenant of friendship, and affectionately part from each other.

1 AND David, *taking the opportunity of Saul's ecstasy,* fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what [is] mine iniquity? and what [is] my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life? *He thought there must be some extraordinary reason for all this violent opposition, and wished to know it, as he was not conscious to himself of any irregularity.* 2 And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die, *thou needest not fear any such thing:* behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it [is] not [so.] *Jonathan seems not to have known all the steps that Saul had taken, or trusted too much to Saul's oath, or supposed he would be better when his frantic fit was over.* 3 And David sware moreover, *took a solemn oath that it was so,* and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, *that is, my resolution to kill David,* lest he be grieved: but truly [as] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, [there is] but a step between me and death, *I stand in extreme danger, like a man on the edge of a precipice.* 4 Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do [it] for thee, *to discover Saul's intention and save thy life.* 5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to-morrow [is] the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third [day] at even*. 6 If thy father at all miss me, then say,

* There was a solemn sacrifice every new moon; this was kept for two days, because the moon sometimes appeared in the evening and sometimes in the morning. They feasted on what was left; and David, as an officer of the king's son, used to be there.

David earnestly asked [leave] of me, that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for [there is] a yearly sacrifice there for all the family*. 7 If he say thus, [It is] well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, [then] be sure that evil is determined by him, *you may conclude that he is still intent upon revenge.* 8 Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant, *by informing me how Saul stands affected to me, and what is the cause of his anger;* for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, *if I have really done any thing deserving of death,* slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father? *betray me to him, by concealing his evil intentions from me.* 9 And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee, *that thou shouldst be put to death, either by me or my father:* for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? *Surely this is the least that I could do.* 10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what [if] thy father answer thee roughly? *How shall I be informed of it, for it will not be possible for thee to come thyself?*

11 And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field, *that they might consult the more privately about this matter.* 12 And Jonathan, *whose heart was filled with generous friendship, and touched at the apprehension of being suspected by David, broke out into a pathetic exclamation, and* said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, *or, as some versions read it, the Lord God be witness,* when I have sounded my father about to-morrow any time, [or] the third [day,] and, behold [if there be] good towards David, and I then send not unto thee, and show it thee; 13 The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father [to do] thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father, *and bring thee to the kingdom.* 14 And *then* thou shalt not only while yet I live, show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: 15 But [also] thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth†. 16 So Jonathan made [a covenant] with the house of

* It was the custom of pious families to assemble at a yearly sacrifice to strengthen their mutual affection, and join in thankfulness to God for common mercies.

† This probably refers to the barbarous custom of the king's successor slaying all the royal family, to prevent disturbance.

David, *with David and his posterity,* [saying,] Let the LORD even require [it] at the hand of David's enemies, *let this imprecation fall upon any that show themselves to be David's enemies, and myself among the rest, if I do so**. 17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul, *and thought he could never do enough to secure his friendship.*

18 Then Jonathan *laid a plan to secure intelligence, and* said to David, To-morrow [is] the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. 19 And [when] thou hast stayed three days, [then] thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was [in hand,] and shalt remain by the stone Ezel, *so called because it showed travellers the way; probably there was some inscription upon it, as it was by the high way.* 20 And I will shoot three arrows on the side [thereof,] as though I shot at a mark. *Thus Jonathan was to show David by a sign what he was to do, lest passengers and spies should prevent their having an interview.* 21 And, behold, I will send a lad, [saying,] Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows [are] on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for [there is] peace to thee, and no hurt; [as] the LORD liveth. 22 But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows [are] beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away. 23 And [as touching] the matter which thou and I have spoken of, *the covenant between us,* ver. 16, 17, behold, the LORD [be] *a witness or judge* between thee and me for ever.

24 So David, *when the time was come,* hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king, *as wicked a man as he was, had some regard to the sacred feast, and he* sat him down to eat meat. 25 And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, [even] upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, *either when his father was coming in, or to give his uncle Abner room,* and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. 26 Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought something hath befallen him, he [is] not clean; surely he [is] not clean; *he has contracted some ceremonial pollution, which renders him unclean until the evening.* (See Lev. xi. 24. xv. 16.) 27 And it came to pass on the morrow, [which was] the second [day] of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul

* It was in remembrance of this covenant that David was so kind to Mephibosheth.

said unto Jonathan his son, *in a scornful and reproachful manner,* Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to-day? 28 And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked [leave] of me, [to go] to Beth-lehem: 29 And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me [to be there:] and now if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. 30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, *he suspected that it was designed,* and *breaking out into a most furious passion, showing no reverence for the company, nor regard for the festival,* he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious [woman,] *or, thou perverse rebel,* do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? *By choosing an enemy for thy friend, thou provest thyself not to be my son, that thy mother is a false adulteress, and thou unworthy to inherit the kingdom:* 31 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and [fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. *This a little roused Jonathan's resentment.* 32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father *with rather too much heat,* And said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? 33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David; *he knew there was no making any terms, or expectation of Saul's altering his sentiments.* 34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, *this was one reason, and* because his father had done him shame, *had reproached and abused him, and attempted to take his life.*

35 And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan *taking his bow and arrows, either for amusement, or military exercise,* went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. 36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. [And] as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad *with a loud voice, so that David might hear him from under the rock, and easily distinguish the word, beyond,* and said, [Is] not the arrow beyond thee? And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and

came to his master. 39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. 40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry [them] to the city; *seeing the coast clear and that there was no danger of a discovery, he was willing to have a short interview.*

41 [And] as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of [a place] towards the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded*. 42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IN Jonathan here is a noble, heroic instance of faithful friendship. *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* He loved one that was to supplant him, one that was in adversity. This was an extraordinary friendship, built on the purest principles. This example of candour, integrity, and steadiness in friendship, deserves our imitation. He that hath such a friend, should show himself friendly, and make all possible returns. It was great kindness in Jonathan to hazard his own life in the service of his friend. *Greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friend; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us;* and after his example, we are commanded *to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

2. We have here a further proof, how much like a brute and a monster, ungoverned passions make a man. Few are more hard to be convinced and reformed, than men of strong passions and ungoverned spirits. In the example of Saul they may see, as in a glass, their own features. What a violent passion was he in with his own son, who was dutiful, valiant and pious. Jona-

* David might weep because he was banished from his wife and family, his kindred, and the house of God. But it seems rather to be Jonathan's generosity that overwhelmed David; that he was leaving such a faithful friend, who had just saved his life at the hazard of his own, and that he was leaving him to the fury of a madman, who would, if possible, destroy him for his regard to David. Both of them were too much affected to say much more, therefore Jonathan, who was least moved, takes leave of him in a more calm, religious manner, reminding him of their mutual engagements and solemn covenant in the sight of God.

than's conduct was no evidence that his mother was a perverse, rebellious woman; but passionate men never scruple what they say, or whom they abuse. Saul vented all the scandalous, ill-natured words he could think of, and then attempted to kill him. Let persons of hot and hasty tempers recollect this instance, and read this story again and again; let masters of families and parents often reflect upon it; that seeing the odiousness of anger and passion, they may treat their servants with mildness, and their children with tender affection. *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;* but, *as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on bowels of affection, compassion, and gentleness; forbearing and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

CHAPTER XXI.

David, imposing upon Ahimelech, gets provisions and a sword; he flies to Gath, and imposeth on the Philistines.

1 THEN came David to Nob* to Ahimelech the priest, *either to take leave of the ark, or to seek direction:* and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why [art] thou alone, and no man with thee? *Having heard of Saul's displeasure against David, he might suppose he was flying from him, and that it might be dangerous to shelter him, especially as Doeg was now there.* 2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed [my] servants to such and such a place; *he might have some servants, but had no soldiers as he used to have: the rest of the story was a lie*†. 3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give [me] five [loaves of] bread in mine hand, or what there is present: *he wanted pro-*

* This was a city of Benjamin, twelve miles from Gibeah. Saul brought the ark and the tabernacle there, for the sake of consulting God, and being near the court.

† Some writers have attempted to vindicate this falsehood, by saying his intention was innocent, it was designed to keep the priests from the blame of siding with him; and that we are not obliged to speak all the truth to our own or others' disadvantage. But nothing can vindicate a lie. We are not to *do evil that good may come.* David bewails this sin, ch. xxii. 22., and prays against it, Psalm cxix. 29.

visions; he was afraid of Doeg, whom he knew; he could not stay while bread was baked, or while the priest went to his own house, which might be at a distance, to get some. 4 And the priest answered David, and said, [There is] no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women, *their wives, by the use of whom they contracted ceremonial uncleanness,* Exodus xix. 15. 5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women [have been] kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and [the bread is] in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel, *or, especially when this day there is other bread sanctified in the vessel, and ready to be put on the table.* 6 So the priest gave him hallowed [bread:] for there was no bread there but the shew bread that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away. 7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul [was] there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name [was] Doeg, an Edomite, *but a proselyte to the Jewish religion,* the chiefest of the herdmen that [belonged] to Saul *.

8 And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste. *He came without a weapon to prevent suspicion, and that he might appear as a private man; but he gave another reason to the priest.* 9 And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it [is here] wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod, *in the priest's wardrobe:* if thou wilt take that, take [it] for [there is] no other save that here. And David said, [There is] none like that; give it me, *as being a pledge of God's favour to him, and a great encouragement to his faith: and the priest gave it him, and inquired of the Lord for him; what the answer was, we know not; perhaps there was none, as a punishment for his lying.*

10 And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath†. 11 And the servants of

* He was the inspector or governor of the herdmen belonging to Saul, who, though a king, did not think it beneath him to have flocks and herds. This man, wicked as he was, kept up the rites of religion, and came to sacrifice or pay his vows at the tabernacle.

† It was strange that he should fly to the city of Goliath, and with his sword too. But he hoped they would receive him as an enemy of Saul. Outlaws of a nation have generally been sheltered by their enemies. Themistocles the Athenian

Achish said unto him, [Is] not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? *The courtiers remonstrated against this, as appears by* Psalm liv., *they watched him narrowly and wrested his words. They considered him as the chief commander, next to the king, and probably would become his successor; they heard what was done in Israel, how fond the people were of him, and therefore advised Achish to kill him.* 12 And David, *aware of his danger,* laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13 And *therefore* he *had recourse to a stratagem, whereby he betrayed great distrust in God, and was guilty of such unmanly dissimulation, as is unbecoming a servant of his; and he* changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. 14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore [then] have ye brought him to me? *This pretence was the more easily believed, as they would scarce suppose a man in his senses would come there with Goliath's sword, and after having done the Philistines so much mischief. Achish intimates that there was no service to be hoped for from him, nor any reason to fear him:* 15 Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this [fellow] to play the madman in my presence? shall this [fellow] come into my house? *shall my court be degraded with a madman? Notwithstanding this, Achish had a very great respect for him* (see ch. xxvii.); *he saw through the pretence, but was willing to send David away.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We hence learn, that mercy is to be preferred to sacrifice, and that ritual observances must give way to moral duties. This is our Lord's inference from this story, Matt. xii. 3—7. Many things may be done in cases of urgent necessity, which would otherwise be improper; and this vindicates doing acts of necessity and mercy on the Lord's day. But we should be careful, on

general, when banished, fled to the enemies whom he had often conquered. David durst not fly to other nations who were at peace with Saul, for they would have delivered him up. It seems Achish gave him a kind reception. The true secret appears to me to be this, that Achish had a great respect for him, as a brave man, and liked him the better for having killed the proud Goliath, between whom and Achish there was no great friendship.

the other hand, that we do not run into unjustifiable liberty, which seems to be more peculiarly the fault of the present day. *Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.*

2. When Providence reduces us to straits and difficulties, we have great need to watch over our own hearts. When David was driven out, and wanted provision, what sins did he run into! What mean artifices did he use to secure himself! Such as were unbecoming a good man, and one that knew better. He afterwards severely repented of his folly. The greatest straits will not justify stealing, lying, and such evil practices. It is better to want bread than grace; better to starve, than sin against God. *These things are written for our instruction and admonition.* Poverty is a strong temptation to dishonesty and fraud: but let those who are poor and distressed, *watch and pray that they enter not into temptation.* We may all learn the suitableness of Agur's prayer, Prov. xxx. 7—9., *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me;* fix me in the middle station of life: *lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

CHAPTER XXII.

In this chapter we find several persons resorting to David at Adullam; Doeg's accusation of Ahimelech; and Saul's command to kill the priests.

1 DAVID therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave, *or strong hold,* Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard [it,] they went down thither to him *to secure themselves, apprehending danger from Saul.* 2 And every one [that was] in distress, *who were weary of Saul's arbitrary government and oppression,* and every one [that was] in debt *to cruel creditors, and were unable to pay, and whose goods and lands were perhaps seized upon,* and every one [that was] discontented, *that was bitter of soul, under some grievous oppression,* gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men*. 3 And David went thence to

* These were not a troop of banditti, roving robbers, and murderers; they were not, as Mr. Henry observes, wicked men, of a restless spirit; they might be good, and were glad to escape Saul's fury. We find, 1 Chron. xii. 18., that they

Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, *who was Saul's enemy, but Ruth's great grandson, and allied to the house of Jesse**, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, [and be] with you, till I know what God will do for me. *His father and mother were aged and could not bear the confinement of a cave, and unable to wander about with him from place to place.* 4 And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold, *so long as he was forced to wander from place to place to secure himself.*

5 And the prophet Gad† said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

6 When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that [were] with him, *that he appeared openly in the land of Judah,* (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having a spear in his hand, and all his servants [were] standing about him; *he had left every other business to pursue David; kept a flying camp, and a spear in his hand, ready to rush upon him in a moment; he hunted for his precious life;)* 7 Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, [and] make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds? *will he promote, advance, and enrich you all, as I have done? He will rather reward those of his own tribe;* 8 That all of you have conspired against me, *to conceal David's design,* and [there is] none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse‡, and [there is] none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day. *If this was true, one would be sorry for him, but there was no ground for this suspicion.* 9 Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahi-

were brave men. He never entertained them till he was an outlaw and in danger of his life; he never oppressed with them, nor loved to plunder, except upon the enemies of Israel. They cultivated the wilderness, were of service to their country, and no doubt, many Israelites who loved David, sent them supplies.

* It was at this time David composed the twenty-seventh Psalm.

† Gad was a young prophet out of Samuel's academy. It was a great comfort and support to David to have such a one with him at this time. He advised David to go to the land of Judah, and appear publicly, as one that was conscious of his own innocence, and trusted in God.

‡ It appears he suspected there was a league between them, and carried his jealousy so far, as to imagine that Jonathan encouraged David to appear in arms.

melech the son of Ahitub. 10 And he inquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine *.

11 Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that [were] in Nob: and they came *readily* all of them to the king. 12 And Saul said, *with the utmost contempt,* Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, *with the respect due to a king,* Here I [am,] my lord. 13 And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait as at this day? *This was a rash charge, for there was no kind of proof that he did these things with an evil intent, as if there had been a plot between them.* 14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who [is so] faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house? *David was so faithful and honourable, and nearly related to the king, that he could not but think he was sent on some important business, and therefore consulted God as usual; and he was bound to do it for the king's service.* 15 Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? *it was not the first time, it was a usual thing: as to any conspiracy,* be it far from me: let not the king impute [any] thing unto his servant, [nor] to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more, *I was entirely ignorant of any ill design. This would have been a sufficient apology to any one but a madman.* 16 And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house. *Saul had made the resolution, though Ahimelech had done nothing worthy of death, or bonds, much less had his father's house. But this was the king's peremptory sentence, and he immediately orders it to be put into execution.*

17 And the king, *with an air of cruelty and impiety,* said unto the footmen that stood about him, *or rather, the guards that went before him,* Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; *as if he was determined to contend with Jehovah, as well as David;* because their hand also [is] with David, and because they knew when he

* Doeg thought it was the best way to pay his court to Saul, and therefore charged Ahimelech with aiding and abetting the king's enemies; and intimates, that there was a confederacy between him and the priests. David justly styles him, in Psalm lii., *a false tongue.* He did not tell what pretence David made, which would have been to Ahimelech's honour, for assisting one that he supposed was going about the king's business; he gave him the victuals and sword innocently.

fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king *had so much reverence for God and religion, that they* would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD: *these brave men refused, though in imminent danger of losing their places or their lives.* 18 And the king said to Doeg *the informer,* Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and, *as Josephus says, taking some men with him, who were as wicked as himself,* he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod, *who ministered in holy things, were in the flower of their age, and probably came to Saul in their priestly garments.* 19 And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword; *he treated them worse than the Amalekites; thinking by this to terrify the Israelites from showing any countenance or favour to David.*

20 And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, *who had probably been left to attend the sanctuary,* escaped and fled after David. 21 And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the LORD's priests. 22 And David said unto Abiathar, I knew [it] that day, when Doeg the Edomite [was] there, that he would surely tell Saul, *I feared some mischief, knowing he was wicked, and no friend to me;* I have occasioned [the death] of all the persons of thy father's house, *expressing great concern that he should be, without intention, the cause of this evil.* 23 Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou [shalt be] in safeguard; *perceiving him to be affrighted, he encouraged him, promising he would take as much care of him as of himself, and he might depend upon God's care**.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM David's example we may infer, that the care of aged parents is a great duty in youth, and highly commendable. When they are in sickness or old age, it is but justice to make a return for their care and kindness. They should never be suf-

* It will be proper to read the fifty-second psalm in this connexion. There we see the sad consequences of the Israelites choosing a king, and rejecting the Lord. It was some comfort under former oppressions, that they had the ark and the priests of the Lord; but now the priests were destroyed, and there were none to attend the ark: this was fulfilling that prophecy which foretold the destruction of Eli's house in one day, 1 Sam. ii.

fered to want any thing that will conduce to their comfort. *If any widow have children, or nephew, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God.* 1 Tim. v. 4. They must do this, as they hope to have the same returns of love when they grow old; or, as David expresses it in the twenty-seventh psalm, composed on this occasion, that *when father and mother forsake them, the Lord may take them up.*

2. How much to be pitied is the man who is troubled with a suspicious, jealous temper. Had we not such flagrant proofs of the wickedness of Saul's heart, we could scarce help pitying him; though he had all his guards and courtiers about him, he was racked with envy and tormented with jealousy. Such burdens are they to themselves, who suspect and are jealous of all around them; they fear their enemies when they have no reason; and suspect their friends also. Such persons are their own tormentors; and one need not wish a man worse, than to have his eye evil towards all about him. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?*

3. See what a sad thing a tyrannical government is, and what reason we have to be thankful that ours is not so. In what a mad, arbitrary manner, did Saul give his orders; and how soon did he find some to execute his bloody commands! He was no better than a madman, yet he found some who were wicked enough to do as he bade them, because he was a king. Innocent actions may have very ill constructions put upon them; no defence however is to be heard; right or wrong, the king's pleasure must be obeyed. Let us earnestly pray, that kings and rulers may have a sound mind; and give thanks to God, that our lives and fortunes are not at the mercy of capricious and tyrannical men, but are all safe, under a good government and the favour of heaven. Blessed be God, that *the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and that we have a goodly heritage.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

This chapter contains an account of David's saving Keilah; the danger and deliverance he found there; his interview with Jonathan; Saul's pursuit of him; and his extraordinary escape out of Saul's hands.

1 THEN they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, *a city in the tribe of Judah*, and they rob the threshing floors, *which were without the city.* 2 Therefore David, *thinking it would be too rash to go against such a multitude without a divine promise,* inquired of the LORD, *by the prophet Gad*, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. 3 And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? *His people remonstrate against it, and urge, that they were not safe in their own country, among some friends, much less there, with a powerful enemy before them, and Saul coming in their rear.* 4 Then David inquired of the LORD yet again, *to satisfy his followers.* And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. 5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, *to support himself and his followers, without burdening the country,* and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. 6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, [that] he came down [with] an ephod in his hand; *or rather, with the ephod, the principal garment of the high priest, which was the breastplate and jewel, and the Urim and Thummim. It was a great comfort to David to have both a prophet and a high priest with him.*

7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah, *and had delivered it; but he was not mollified by David's generosity and service to Israel.* And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars; *he thought that he had him safe, that this place of security would prove a trap to him.* 8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege

David and his men, *though he pretended it was to be avenged on the Philistines.*

9 And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod, *that we may consult God.* 10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. 11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant*. And the LORD said, He will come down. 12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver [thee] up *if thou stayest here.* 13 Then David and his men, [which were] *now increased by David's bravery and success to* about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go, *sometimes to one place and sometimes to another.* And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbare to go forth. *Since the slaughter of the priests, the people were afraid to conceal David, and Saul seems to have had better intelligence of his motions.* 14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. *When David was in Keilah, Saul said, God hath delivered him into my hand; but the sacred penman assures us God did not.* 15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David [was] in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood, *and here a private meeting was appointed with his friend Jonathan.* 16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God, *encouraged him, and strengthened his faith by consideration of God's promises, faithfulness, providence, &c.* 17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. 18 And they two made a covenant before the LORD, *renewed it, perhaps in the presence of the prophet Gad, and the high priest:* and David abode in the wood and Jonathan went to his house.

19 Then came up the Ziphites, *who dwelt in the wilderness of Judah, knew the avenues of the wood, were able to discover him,*

* David was in some confusion and asked two questions together, and out of order. His first question should have been, Will Saul come down? and then, Will the people of Keilah deliver me up? God therefore answers the last question first.

and resolved to do it, and came to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which [is] on the south of Jeshimon? 20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our parts [shall be] to deliver him into the king's hand. 21 And Saul, *transported with joy at this discovery,* said, Blessed [be] ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me, *ye are the only people who have pity for me, the generality will not favour my design.* 22 Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, [and] who hath seen him there: for it is told me [that] he dealeth very subtilly, *and is very hard to be taken. I am not willing to pursue him in vain, but am determined to have him if possible.* 23 See therefore and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah. 24 And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men, *knowing the errand on which they went, removed, and* [were] *now* in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon. 25 Saul also and his men went to seek [him.] And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, *or from the rock,* and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard [that,] he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon; *his intelligence was so good that he came to the very spot where David was**. 26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men *were numerous, and divided into parties, that he almost* compassed David and his men round about to take them.

27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded, *or spread themselves upon,* thy land†. 28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammahlekoth, *that is, the rock of divisions, a name given it by David, as a memorial of his deliverance, because Saul was forced to separate himself there, and leave off pursuing him.*

* On this occasion David composed the fifty-fourth psalm.

† This was a remarkable providence, for David must certainly have fallen into his hands, if he had not been called away. It is probable the Philistines had seized upon Saul's estate, or he would not have been so eager to go, for he did not stir when Keilah was besieged.

29 And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-gedi, *where he planted vineyards, for which this place was afterwards very famous.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. The generosity of David in saving Keilah, is worthy of our imitation; and intimates to us, that we are to do good, though we may receive ill treatment from others. Nothing should lessen our regard for the public welfare. Another man would perhaps have rejoiced at the invasion, and encouraged it, to save himself and prevent Saul's pursuit, and to force him to recall David. But he had no such narrow views; he was glad to save his country and his friends at any rate. It is no reason why we should decline doing good, because we are not treated as we think we deserve. We should learn *to overcome evil with good;* we serve a good Master, who will well reward us, however we are treated by men.

2. We see here an instance of base ingratitude, and learn to detest that odious vice. We should have thought that David was safe in Keilah, the place which he had just saved from the Philistines; but they forgat his kindness, and had he not escaped, would have delivered him to Saul. Men's own dangers often make them forget their obligations to their friends. Let us not trust too much even to those who are obliged to us, for they may forget us and our kindness; but guard against ingratitude ourselves, and every appearance of it.

3. We learn, what intimate acquaintance God has with the hearts of men. David did not know what the men of Keilah would do; perhaps they did not know themselves how in general they should determine, which way the magistrates would incline; but the Lord knew. He knows men better than they know themselves, and what they will do in such and such circumstances. We should therefore reverence him who knows the secret dispositions and inclinations of men's hearts, and *beholds the thoughts afar off*.

4. Observe with what an ill grace the name of God comes out of the mouth of a wicked man. *God has delivered him,* said Saul. 'Nothing, says an ingenious writer, is more grating to a serious ear, than strains of piety from profane mouths; to hear the wretch who had despised the commands of God, murdered his priests, and desolated his sanctuary; in a word, lived in open

defiance of God; to hear such a wretch talk of God, and the divine determinations in his favour, is past enduring.' And yet this is too common a case; of many people it may be said, *God is near to their mouths, but far from their reins, or hearts.* May we dread hypocrisy, and all approaches towards it. Let not our actions give our tongues the lie; for nothing is more abominable to God and man, than to talk like an angel, and live like a brute.

5. We see that Providence is never at a loss to deliver good men out of their adversity. David wandered about from place to place, but was still safe. Had he been asked, Where he intended to shelter himself next? he might have answered, as Luther did when he was outlawed by the Emperor, and excommunicated by the Pope, *Sub cœlo,* somewhere under the canopy of heaven. God diverted Saul from the pursuit, just when he thought he had David in his hands. The Philistines intended no kindness to David, but God meant it so. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. *In the mount the Lord shall be seen.* He can always find out ways and means of preserving his people. In the moment of danger he interposes. This should teach us to make God our confidence, and prevent the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. *Trust in him, therefore, at all times, ye people, and pour out your hearts before him.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

We read here of the generous manner in which David saved Saul's life when he had it in his power; his expostulation with Saul concerning his enmity to him; and the good effect it had upon Saul for the present.

1 AND it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines *who had invaded his land,* that it was told him saying, Behold, David [is] in the wilderness of En-gedi. 2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, *in whose courage and attachment he could confide,* and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats, *in the craggy places where the wild goats frequented.* 3 And he came

to the sheepcotes by the way where [was] a *large* cave *; and Saul went in to cover his feet, *and to sleep, being fatigued with his march:* and David and his men remained in the sides, *in the dark recesses,* of the cave, *where Saul could not see them.* 4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee †. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, *which came down to his feet,* privily. 5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt; *he was greatly troubled, as it had the appearance of injury and indignity to the Lord's anointed.* 6 And he said unto his men, *who seem to have resented it that he had not slain him,* The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he [is] the anointed of the LORD, *he was set up by God, who alone can depose him.* 7 So David stayed his servants, *who would have smote Saul,* with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on [his] way.

8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and, *in the most soft and submissive terms,* cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. 9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? *He endeavours to mollify him, by laying all the blame on his wicked counsellors.* 10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and [some] bade [me] kill thee: but [mine eye] spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he [is] the LORD's anointed. 11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that [there is] neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; *my having not killed thee, is a proof I had no evil intentions against thee;* yet

* Historians inform us there were many large caves in the mountainous parts of Judea, particularly one which would hold four thousand men; into these they used to drive their flocks in violent storms, or in the heat of the day.

† God had never promised to deliver Saul into David's hands; but so they interpreted the promise of the kingdom, and thought David should take this providential opportunity of killing his enemy, possessing the kingdom, and advancing them.

thou huntest my soul to take it. *It was an aggravation of Saul's guilt, that he sought the life of one who had done nothing to offend him, and would not hurt him when it was in his power.* 12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee; *I appeal to God, as the righteous judge, and doubt not but he will vindicate me.* 13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, *men may be known by their actions; had I been a bad man, I should now have shown it; if I wished to dethrone thee, I had now an opportunity to do it:* but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea; *how shameful is the pursuit, how inglorious the conquest of one so mean! it is below the king of Israel to hunt after a dead dog, or a flea; to raise an army against so contemptible a person.* 15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand. *It is wonderful that he who was so much enraged, and came with such a murderous intention, should hear David with so much patience; but he was quite astonished to find him following, and to see so much courage, generosity, and kindness; all this mollified him for the present.*

16 And it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, [Is] this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. 17 And he said to David, Thou [art] more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. 18 And thou hast showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. *He was now in a good mood, saw his own injustice and David's kindness, and acknowledged it was unparalleled.* 19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? *yet thou hast spared my life;* wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. 20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand*. 21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house, *as I have endeavoured*

* Saul knew from many circumstances, and especially from this extraordinary providence, and the princely virtues which David showed, that he would be king; and that nothing could hinder it. Therefore he might have argued, that his pursuit of him was very wicked, that it was impious to desire to frustrate the designs of Providence, and to secure the crown to his own posterity.

to destroy thee. He knew David to be a conscientious man, and that an oath before the Lord would be sufficient. 22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold *of Engedi, where he composed the fifty-seventh and the hundred and forty-second psalms.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. Observe the good effects of generosity and kindness. David here exhibits a remarkable instance of both. His men mutinied, and wanted him to put an end to their troubles and his own; otherwise they were ready to forsake him, and to deliver him to Saul, but he bravely refused. His kindness overcame those cruel, obstinate men; made the savage Saul tame, and turned the lion into a lamb. What an honour and pleasure to him to triumph thus gloriously over his enemies; to see his prince his petitioner, and his enemy entreating his mercy! We learn from this example how to treat our enemies. Such conduct as this may reclaim them, at least it will secure pleasure and peace to ourselves. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

2. What a happy thing is it to have a tender conscience! David's heart smote him for this small offence; though it was done for a good end, to convince Saul of his innocence, and how unreasonably jealous he had been. A tender conscience is afraid of the least sin; often regrets those actions which others pass over with ease, and which give them but little or no concern. Let us then endeavour to keep our hearts open to conviction, and our consciences awake to take the alarm. *Happy is he that feareth always;* this is the way to be safe; presumption is dangerous. The surest way to prevent great evils, and being guilty of great wickedness, is to be afraid of *the very appearance of evil.*

3. We are here taught, that the justice of God is the refuge and support of oppressed innocence. David appealed to God again and again, with courage and confidence. To him let the righteous commit their cause; sooner or later he will bring their righteousness to light. *Wherefore let them who suffer for well-doing, commit the keeping of themselves unto the Lord.*

4. Let us guard against credulity, or believing every word, and

trusting too much to the promises of any men, especially of those men whose passions are strong, and who make light of promises and oaths. *David gat him up unto the hold;* he knew it was dangerous to trust to the mercy of a reconciled enemy. A wise man will give the good words even of an enemy the hearing, but will not confide too much in them, he will still be upon his guard. David was a bold man in venturing so near Saul; but he would not trust him too far. Courage and prudence should always go together; and if we would be safe, let us take our Lord's advice, to *be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

CHAP. XXV. 1—22.

We have here an account of Samuel's death; and of Nabal's churlishness.

1 AND Samuel, *being near an hundred years old, and greatly beloved by all the people,* died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, *bewailed the loss of so much virtue and goodness, and their sin in choosing a king;* and *they* buried him in his house at Ramah; *this was the burying place of the family, from whence his remains were removed with incredible pomp by the emperor, in the year* 401. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran, *to the tents of Kedar, where he would be more out of Saul's way.*

2 And [there was] a man in Maon, whose possessions [were] in Carmel; and the man [was] very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3 Now the name of the man [was] Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and [she was] a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man [was] churlish and evil in his doings; and he [was] of the house of Caleb, *a Calebite**. 4 And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. 5 And David *to show respect to him,* sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet

* The word Caleb signifies a dog; Nabal was of a dogged temper, snarlish and snapping at every body.

him in my name: 6 And thus shall ye say to him that liveth [in prosperity,] Peace [be] both to thee, and peace [be] to thine house, and peace [be] unto all that thou hast, *wish him and his all health and happiness. This was a very affectionate and comprehensive salutation; including all blessings for both worlds.* 7 And now I have heard that thou hast shearers; now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. 8 Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day*; give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David†. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased, *gave him no just offence by their further importunity.*

10 And Nabal answered David's servants *with great contempt,* and said *in a violent passion,* Who [is] David? and who [is] the son of Jesse? *as if he was so mean a person that he was not known, though he had done well in Israel, had slain Goliath, was the king's son in law, and well known to the Philistines:* there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. *He here taxed him with infidelity to Saul, and pleaded that what he had was his own and provided for other sort of men.* 11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give [it] unto men, whom I know not whence they [be?] *Intimating that they were a crew of idle, vagabond fellows, and that it did not become an honest man to countenance and support them.* 12 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings. 13 And David, *being resolved in the height of his resentment to be avenged on him,* said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

14 But one of the young men *among the shearers, who was*

* Sheep-shearing is now a time of feasting and rejoicing.

† David here pleaded that he had done Nabal's men no evil, though soldiers, and in necessity; yea, they had, as we find afterwards, taken particular care to protect them; but David modestly omitted that, and appealed to his servants who were ready to inform him of it. He urged his giving them something; he did not want delicacies, but would be content with what could be most easily spared. He called himself *his son David,* to testify his respect, as being of the same tribe. This was a very handsome address, and would have affected any one else, but such a churl as Nabal was.

wiser and better than his master, went and told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. 15 But the men [were] very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: 16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep*. 17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he [is such] a son of Belial, that [a man] cannot speak to him. *He concluded that David would resent it, but durst not remonstrate with Nabal, as he would only be more insolent and abusive, and was such an obstinate, surly man, that there was no making any impression on him.* 18 Then Abigail made haste, *like a prudent woman she did not neglect the wise advice of a servant,* and *she* took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine†, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched [corn,] and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid [them] on asses. 19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me, *that the sight of the present may in some measure appease David;* behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal, *lest he should persist in his insolence, and prevent her going.* 20 And it was [so, as] she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them *in a valley between the two hills.* 21 Now, *in order to show the wonderful effect that Abigail's address had, the historian observes that* David had said *to his men,* Surely in vain have I kept all that this [fellow] hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that [pertained] unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that [pertain] to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall‡.

* He bears his testimony to the usefulness as well as innocence of David's men; who kept them from wild beasts, from the Philistines, who robbed the threshing floors, and from the Arabians and others, who lived on plunder. This proves that David's men were not a banditti, but honest, peaceable men, and under good discipline.

† These were large leathern bottles, such as are still used in the east.

‡ That is, not a man. This was undoubtedly a rash oath, but their extremity should be considered; that Nabal used David very unjustly, as well as insolently; and that he and his men had a right to some reward for such service.

REFLECTIONS.

1. What a melancholy thing is it for a comely, prudent, virtuous woman, to be yoked to a surly, drunken fool! Surely it was for the sake of wealth, that this lovely woman was married to a man who had not one good quality to recommend him. The present day affords instances of many women, who, through the folly of their parents, or their own pride, are thrown away upon fools or sots, or tied to golden brutes. What a piteous case must this poor woman be in, to have an husband whose folly she could not but see and despise; for which she was obliged to make excuses; and excuses, the more grievous as they reflected upon her own good sense and prudence. The fair sex may see in this chapter, what sort of an husband a sot and a fool is likely to make; and what trials those are likely to meet with, who marry for wealth only: trials, for which all their good sense and religion will be little enough. Let parents learn to make a wise choice for their children, and not look upon money or estate as the chief thing to be regarded. There cannot be a more pitiable spectacle than such an unequal marriage as this chapter represents. Though perhaps to some women of beautiful countenances and good understandings, such husbands may be allotted by Providence, as necessary to allay that vanity, which so many accomplishments are apt to inspire them with.

2. The surly, the rude, and uncharitable, may here see their own picture; and a very lively one indeed it is. No sooner was Nabal asked a favour, in a very civil and respectful manner, than he fell into a passion, and abused the petitioner. There are too many instances of this conduct in every age of the world. There are those who abuse the poor, that they may be excused from relieving them; who give surly answers, when asked for contributions for public and useful services, and plead their own necessity and inability, with as much earnestness and as little justice as Nabal did. Though he had nothing to spare, Abigail could find a handsome present, and he could find enough to make himself and his servants drunk with. It is thus that men often spend on their own dress, their tables, or their furniture, that which they ought to do good with; and plead inability, when it is really owing to nothing but luxury and extravagance.

CHAP. XXV. 23, to the end.

In which we have Abigail's interposition with David, and the good effects of it; David's gratitude to God for his providential interference; the sudden death of Nabal; and David's marriage to Abigail and Ahinoam.

23 AND when Abigail saw David, *saw by his haste and his looks that vengeance was determined, and all her address would be little enough to divert it,* she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, 24 And fell at his feet, *did him reverence, as a great man,* and *in a speech full of the most natural and moving eloquence,* said, Upon me, my lord, [upon] me [let this] iniquity [be:] and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid; *like a kind wife she desires to suffer for her husband; and having bespoke a patient hearing, she adds,* 25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, [even] Nabal: for as his name [is,] so [is] he; Nabal [is] his name, and folly [is] with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send*. 26 Now therefore, my lord, [as] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to [shed] blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand†, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal, *be so inconsiderable, as not to be capable of doing him any hurt.* 27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord, *permit thy servants to accept it, as it is too mean for thee.* 28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid, *in taking all the blame upon myself, and seeking to appease thy wrath:* for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; *she prays him*

* Abigail here represents her husband as a man not worthy of David's anger; telling him that in all this Nabal had but acted like himself; that he might as well be angry with a cur for snarling, or an ass for braying, as with Nabal for ingratitude, sordidness, and railing. A prudent woman would not have said so much of her husband if she could have helped it; but it was so notorious a thing, that she could not make a better excuse; and it was intended to prevent the ruin of the family.

† This was very artful and ingenious, to presume so much upon his clemency and goodness, as to hope she had already diverted him from his purpose.

to be kind to her, as God would certainly be to him; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee [all] thy days, *thou hast hitherto been famous for heroic deeds, and always acted nobly and generously.* 29 Yet a man, *even Saul,* is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God, *shall be safe in his hand or custody;* and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, [as out] of the middle of a sling, *they shall be destroyed as worthless things.* 30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; 31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself*: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid, *thou wilt then thank me for my advice; or rather, let me then entreat thy friendship whenever I may need it.* 32 And David *was immediately softened, and* said to Abigail, Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: 33 And blessed [be] thy advice, and blessed [be] thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to [shed] blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand; *he first adored the providence of God, which sent her so seasonably to divert his anger, and prevent the execution of his purpose; then commended her and her prudent counsel, and prayed God to bless her.* 34 For in very deed, [as] the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall, *for I was determined to make an example of that brutish wretch.* 35 So David received of her hand [that] which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person; *her presents and discourse were extremely acceptable; and he dismissed her with great complacency, thinking that his rash oath did not lay him under any obligation to do wrong.*

36 And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart [was]

* She brought the strongest argument at last, that when he came to the throne, (of which she speaks, with certainty) he would not be disturbed with the remembrance of having shed innocent blood; he would not have this to be a blemish to his glory. A forgiving temper is the way to have a clear and quiet conscience.

merry within him, for he [was] very drunken*; wherefore she told him nothing less or more until the morning light. 37 But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became [as] a stone, *he was quite confounded, and fainted away*†. 38 And it came to pass about ten days [after,] that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

39 And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed [be] the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head‡. And David, *having had such a proof of Abigail's wisdom and piety, and being charmed with her person and address, after a decent time paid his addresses to her, and* sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. 40 And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife. 41 And she arose, and bowed herself on [her] face to the earth, and said, Behold, [let] thine handmaid [be] a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord; *she received the message with great courteousness and humility, and expressed her readiness to perform the lowest office even for his servants.* 42 And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her *as her attendants;* and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. 43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives§.

44 But *as to his first wife,* Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which [was] of Gallim, *and as she lived in adultery, David had a right to marry again. Saul did this to affront and grieve him, and to cut off all his pretences to the crown on that account.*

* Perhaps he was carried to bed dead drunk. It was a sign he was a fool, if he could not use his plenty without abusing it; or be pleasant among his friends, but he must make a beast of himself.

† We have many instances of persons dying suddenly at being told the danger they had escaped, but he languished some time.

‡ David did not rejoice in his death itself, but took notice of it as an instance of divine justice, which at once vindicated him, and was an encouragement to him and others to trust in God, without avenging themselves.

§ This was undoubtedly wrong; though, as our Lord intimates, through the hardness of their hearts, and the darkness of that dispensation, it was overlooked at that time.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We may hence infer what a great blessing a wife of prudence and good understanding is to a family. *A virtuous woman,* says Solomon, *is a crown to her husband.* Abigail rescued her family from ruin, by her prudence and good sense. Her husband's foibles set her virtues in a more beautiful light. Let those who consult their own safety, honour and happiness, and the regularity and comfort of their families, endeavour to choose such wives; esteem good sense, good temper, and piety, the first things to be sought for in the choice. *The heart of a husband may safely trust in such a wife,* and *he will have no fear of spoil.*

2. We have reason to bless God for every instance in which we are *kept from sin.* It is a signal mercy, and should be thankfully owned, as David gave God the honour of preserving him. When we have been in danger of falling into sin, and doing that which would have occasioned pain and grief in the recollection, and yet have been prevented, let us bless God. Nothing affords greater joy to a good man than this, or is juster ground of gratitude to God. Whoever is the instrument of our deliverance from such dangers, let God have the praise, who inclined them to reprove us, and enabled us to take it, not only patiently but thankfully, like David; and let us daily pray with a very serious mind, *Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Once more,

3. Let us learn to guard against a revengeful spirit, as what *will be bitterness in the end;* and to maintain a guard over our passions, especially anger, when we meet with unjust and unreasonable treatment. This is a great snare; even the man after God's own heart was too easily provoked, and too intent upon revenge. To many persons, revenge is sweet; they are never satisfied till they are avenged. But it is a base, wicked disposition; and brings sorrow and remorse with it. Many have done things when in a warmth of temper, which they have a thousand times wished had never been done. Let us remember, that the less we indulge our passion, the more we consult our peace. We should depart from rash and wicked resolutions, yea, though we are bound to them by an oath; and repent deeply before God that we ever made them. When angry, or tempted to revenge

affronts, we should consider how it will appear upon reflection, and what a foundation we are laying for our own torment and vexation. *It is the glory of a man to pass by an affront;* and by the gospel, forgiveness of others is a necessary condition of our receiving pardon and acceptance from God. Let us leave our cause with God, who will avenge it if he sees good. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

Saul in this chapter repeats his pursuit of David; who boldly ventures into Saul's camp; addresses Abner, and expostulates with Saul, who acknowledges his fault and returns home.

1 AND the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, [which is] before Jeshimon? *This was base, unprovoked malice in the Ziphites; perhaps they were afraid that if he came to the throne he would revenge their ill usage of him.* 2 Then Saul, *who before seemed to be reconciled,* arose, and, *willing to embrace the opportunity, he* went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. 3 And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which [is] before Jeshimon by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. 4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed, *and was very near him.*

5 And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, *near his chariot, and Abner with him,* and the people pitched round about him. 6 Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, *(who was David's sister,* 1 Chron. ii. 16.), brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee; *he chose to have but one for the sake of secrecy, and left the other on a hill, with directions what to do in case of an alarm.* 7 So David and Abishai came to the

people by night: and behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him. 8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not [smite] him the second time; *the words express great eagerness, Let me nail him to the ground at once.* 9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless? *Being made king by God's appointment, it will be wrong to injure him.* 10 David said furthermore, [As] the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish; *he shall fall by some sudden stroke, as Nabal did, or die by disease, or fall in battle.* 11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed*: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that [is] at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go, *and by this they will see what we could have done had it not been out of respect to him.* 12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw [it,] nor knew [it,] neither awaked: for they [were] all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them; *it was a special providence that they were not discovered in walking through so many ranks, and talking together.*

13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space [being] between them, *yet so near that a voice might be heard in the stillness of the night.* 14 And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answereth thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who [art] thou [that] criest to the king, *to disturb his repose?* 15 And David said to Abner, [Art] not thou a [valiant] man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? *why hast thou not observed better military discipline, and better guarded the king's person?* for there came one of the people in *with an intention* to destroy the king thy lord, *and he had a fair opportunity to do it.* 16 This thing [is] not good that thou hast done. [As] the LORD liveth, ye [are] worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear [is,] and the cruse of water that [was] at his bolster; *he could as easily have*

* He would esteem it his own act, if he permitted another to do it.

taken away his life as his spear. 17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, [Is] this thy voice, my son David? *David's courage, generosity, and piety, and his own ungrateful return, now crowded into his mind.* And David, *acknowledging Saul's authority, and his own allegiance to him,* said, [It is] my voice, my lord, O king. 18 And, *pleading his innocence,* he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil [is] in mine hand? 19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering*: but if [they be] the children of men, cursed [be] they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods; *they have done that which has a tendency to bring me to idolatry.* 20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD, *who sees it, and will avenge it of thee:* for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

21 Then said Saul, I have sinned *both against God and thee:* return, my son David, *to my court again:* for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly, *I am ashamed and sorry for what I have done.* 22 And David, *as an evidence of Saul's danger, and his own innocence,* answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. 23 The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into [my] hand to-day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed†. 24 And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation; *may God deal with me as I have done with thee.* 25 Then Saul said to David, Blessed [be] thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great [things,] and also shalt still prevail; *I find it in vain to pursue thee any longer, whom God intends for great things.* So

* Some suppose he here refers to Saul; 'If God hath sent this spirit into thee, do thou humble thyself, and appease him by a sacrifice, who is angry with thee.' Others say, it refers to David; 'If it be my sins which have caused God to stir thee up against me, I am willing to become a sacrifice to appease his wrath.' I think the beauty of the words lies in their ambiguity, as they may be taken both ways; he leaves Saul's own conscience to find out the meaning.

† Saul might probably know that David was anointed, and therefore he ought to be as tender of David's life, as David was of his.

David went on his way, *took the course he had designed for his own safety, notwithstanding Saul's fair promises;* and Saul returned to his place, *and we do not find that he pursued David any more.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. How soon do wicked hearts lose all their serious impressions and convictions! What could be more solemn than Saul's last promises to David! He seemed deeply affected, and we should scarcely expect he would ever return to his folly; but the next temptation, the very next opportunity, he was as bad as ever. It is too common for men to be impressed with the folly of their ways; to see the sinfulness of their conduct; to be ashamed and humbled for it, and resolve to be better; and yet return to sin, *like the dog to his vomit.* What need have we to watch over ourselves, to form deliberate resolutions, and to pray that God would keep us in a good mind, and *be surety to his servants for good.*

2. We see how easily God can confound the devices and overrule the designs of men. Saul and his three thousand men thought they should now have David safe; but God laid them all asleep. So easily can he baffle the designs of his and his people's enemies. *The stout-hearted have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands.* Let us adore that God, who has so many ways of influencing the minds of men, and controlling their power. Let all good men trust in him, and *make him their fear and their dread;* and then *he will be their shield and their fortress.*

3. We may observe, that to be banished from God's house and ordinances, is one of the greatest griefs to a devout mind. To be absent from God's tabernacle, and in danger of serving other gods, David complained of as a greater grief than leaving the court, or his family, or his friends, or even his native country. Those are the greatest injuries which expose us to sin. To lose the means of grace, and the privileges of God's house, is the greatest of all losses. That this may not be our case, let us highly value them, and carefully improve them while they are continued; and esteem *a day in God's courts better than a thousand* spent in sin and vanity.

4. We learn from the example of Saul, that sin in general, and

especially the sin of persecution, is playing the fool and erring exceedingly. Saul's pursuit of David was not only inveterate malice, but egregious folly; it was driving out the wisest, bravest, greatest, and most worthy man in his dominions. Every instance in which we do evil, we *play the fool*, we act unwisely, and do that which we shall repent of. And in proportion to the degree of light and conviction against which we act, is our error great, and our folly excessive; and proportionably great will be our shame and remorse. Whereas *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

David still fearing Saul, leaves his dominions, and goes over to Achish.

1 AND David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: [there is] nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand. *David thought Saul was not to be trusted, though he had promised fair; therefore, after consulting his friends, as Josephus tells us, he resolved to leave his dominions.* 2 And David arose, and he passed over, with the six hundred men that [were] with him, unto Achish, the son of Maoch*, king of Gath. 3 And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, [even] David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife. 4 And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him, *which otherwise he was disposed to have done.* 5 And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with

* He was called the son of Maoch to distinguish him from the former Achish. David perhaps had some assurance of protection from him. Achish would be glad to have such a brave man out of his enemy's country; as it would weaken the Israelites' forces, and keep up the division; especially as they brought their wives and children as pledges of their fidelity.

thee*? 6 Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day†; wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day. *By this means Achish laid a greater obligation on David, and prevented any disturbances in his capital city.* 7 And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

8 And David and his men went up and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those [nations were] of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt‡. 9 And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to Achish, *to give account of the action, and present him with a share of the spoils.* 10 And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to-day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites§. 11 And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring [tidings] to Gath, saying, lest they should tell on us saying, So did David, and so [will be] his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines; *he brought no man to Gath to tell how the matter was; and the Philistines were not likely to know otherwise, being at a great distance, and busy in preparation for war with Israel.* 12 And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever; *he can now have no thoughts of returning to Israel, but will continue with me, and do me service as long as he lives. It was happy for David that he was settled at Ziklag, it being a proper place for the reception of those who came to him; as we find great numbers did,* see 1 Chron. xii. 1—22.

* David made this request to secure himself from the envy of the courtiers, to keep his men employed, that they might not be in such danger of idolatry and the vices of the Philistines, and have a free exercise of their religion, without offering an affront to the gods of the Philistines.

† This was a frontier town in the lot of Judah, (see Joshua xv. 31.), but the Philistines had kept possession of it till now.

‡ These were the remains of the nations that were devoted to destruction. Saul had not slain all the Amalekites, though he was commanded to do so; some had fled who were probably at enmity with Achish, at least not tributary to him, or confederates with him. Thus David subsisted himself and his people, served his own country, and did not injure his benefactor.

§ This was a fraudulent equivocation, unworthy such a holy man as he was; for Achish would understand that he made an inroad on the southern part of Judah, whereas he meant the countries that lay south of Judah.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We see there may be remainders of unbelief in a pious mind. David did wrong in going to an idolatrous country, where he had before complained of being driven. He had been commanded to stay in Judah, and was assured of the kingdom; and though he could not trust Saul, he might have trusted God. Unbelief is a sin which easily besets good men. They advise with themselves and their friends, but not with their God, and do not look up to him for direction. Let us mourn over the remainder of unbelief in our own hearts, and pray that God would increase our faith.

2. Another fault of David, which should be matter of lamentation and warning, is, that he deceived Achish. Though it was not a direct lie, it had the same consequences and guilt, as it was intended to deceive him. How mean and dishonourable is such a conduct in any, especially in men of distinguished rank and eminence! Let it be our care to avoid this, as every degree of deceit, though it should do others no harm, yet it warps the mind from truth, makes men think lightly of it, and prepares the way for lying. May we guard against every species of deceit, for it will, if encouraged, increase to more ungodliness; it will lead not only to injustice to men, but hypocrisy towards God. Therefore as we are brethren, *let us not lie one to another*, but see to it that our conversation be in simplicity and godly sincerity. *He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.* We should remember that our words are all heard in heaven; and that *by our words we shall be condemned or justified.* We may deceive men, but cannot deceive God; and he has entered it in the decrees of heaven, that *no liar shall inherit eternal life.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

We have in this chapter Saul's terror on account of the attack of the Philistines; the application he made to a witch that he might see Samuel; the conversation he had with Samuel, and the effect it had upon him.

1 AND it came to pass in those days, *while David was with Achish,* that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish, *who depended on David and his men to help him,* said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men. 2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do *. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever, *he in whom I put most confidence for the protection of my life.*

3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. *This is added to show that Saul was now sensible of his loss.* And Saul, *at the beginning of his reign, when Samuel had some influence over him,* had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. 4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem, and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. 5 And when Saul, *from a neighbouring hill,* saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled, *through the terrors of a guilty conscience, and his own impending doom.* 6 And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets †.

7 Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her ‡. And his servants said to him, Behold, [there is] a woman that hath a familiar

* This was an ambiguous answer. David no doubt wished to put him off, and to consult God first, in so nice an affair. But Achish understood him to intimate that he would do his best to serve him.

† It is said, 1 Chron. x. 14., *he inquired not of the Lord.* He did not do it for a long time, but neglected him; and at last did not do it with a sincere, upright heart; wherefore God esteemed it as not done.

‡ Saul here acts like a distracted man, driven to despair; for he knew this practice was contrary to the law of God, and so did all the people; notwithstanding there were some who privately used necromancy, or consulting the dead, which was a practice common among the Gentiles.

spirit at En-dor, *a place near where the army was encamped.* 8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, *that he might not be known, otherwise the woman would not have practised her arts before him;* and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me [him] up *from the grave* whom I shall name unto thee. 9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? *Providence ordered it so that Saul should be told this to his face, to convince him of his sin.* 10 And Saul *assured her of safety, and* sware to her by the LORD, saying, [As] the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing*. 11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 12 And when† the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice, *shrieked out in surprise and terror, having never seen such a sight before:* and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou [art] Saul‡. 13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods§ ascending out of the earth. 14 And he said unto her, What form [is] he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he [is] covered with a mantle, *such as prophets wear.* And Saul perceived that it [was] Samuel *himself*‖, and he stooped

* This story is attended with many difficulties. Commentators have often strangely confounded it and themselves. There are three opinions concerning it. One is, that it was all a juggle; another, that an evil spirit personated Samuel; a third, which seems most likely, that it was really Samuel. The first, that it was a juggle, is absurd in itself, as Saul was not likely to be the dupe of the woman. He and his companions were brave men, and not to be easily imposed upon; they were not frightened, though she was; their whole answer was quite rational. They came suddenly and unexpectedly, so that there was no time for artifice. Had it been a juggle, the woman would not have been frightened. When she knew Saul, she would have flattered him, and have given him some favourable answer; she would not have foretold his death, lest she should suffer for it, and it should be imputed to her enchantments. The reasons why it was not an evil spirit, and that it was really Samuel, will be given as we proceed.

† It must be observed carefully, the word *when* is not in the original; the instant Saul pronounced Samuel's name, she saw him in her cell.

‡ Seeing the venerable prophet himself, she immediately concluded, that he would not appear in this extraordinary manner to any but the king of Israel, and therefore it must be Saul. This plainly proves that her whole art was designed to deceive; and that it was not an evil spirit. If it had been one, and brought up by her art, she would not have been so frightened.

§ The word often signifies *a god*, and so is applied to the true God, to a magistrate, or personage of great honour.

‖ Here a most important word is omitted in the translation, which is in the

with [his] face to the ground, and bowed himself *with great reverence before him.*

15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up*? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. 16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? *Nothing can be more senseless than to imagine that I can do any thing for thee, when God, whose servant I am, hath forsaken thee.* 17 And the LORD hath done to him†, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, [even] to David. 18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. *It is remarkable he does not mention his killing the priests, because the decree of cutting off the kingdom from him was denounced before that was done.* 19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to-morrow‡ [shalt] thou and thy sons [be] with me *in the state of the dead*§: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. 20 Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day nor all the night.

original. He perceived that it was Samuel *himself*, the very same person he had so often seen and conversed with.

* This passage is urged as a proof that it was an evil spirit. But the plain meaning is, that he was grieved to be called on such an errand, to be a witness and reprover of Saul's impiety and madness. He says, *Why hast thou disquieted me?* provoked my spirit? It was not the witch that hath done it, but *thou*.

† *To him.* Dr. Kennicott proves from three Hebrew MSS. and the Greek and vulgate versions, that it should be rendered, *to thee*.

‡ The word often signifies *soon*, see Dent. vi. 20., but it might be literally on the *morrow*, for any thing that appears in the story to the contrary, if this was past midnight, which it probably was.

§ This is a convincing proof that it was really Samuel, for no juggler could have foretold events so precisely, no evil spirit could do it; we have no reason to believe that God would reveal these things to them. Besides, an evil spirit would not have reproved Saul, as this apparition did, nor blame him for inquiring in this way; but would rather have encouraged and countenanced it: Satan is not divided against himself. If it be asked, Why God answered him thus, when he refused to do it in another way? it may be answered, that there was no prophet with Saul. The Urim was with David; and he could not expect dreams or visions. God might wisely suffer Samuel to appear, to make the greater im-

21 And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. 22 Now therefore, I pray thee hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way, *otherwise thou wilt not be able to go to the camp.* 23 But he refused, and said, I will not eat; *he chose rather to die there, than by the Philistines.* But his servants, together with the woman compelled him, *by earnest importunity;* and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed. 24 And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded [it,] and did bake unleavened bread thereof: 25 And she brought [it] before Saul, and before his servants, and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

REFLECTIONS.

1. This remarkable story throws some light upon what has been matter of much debate in the world, concerning witches and apparitions. As to the former, it seems to intimate that witches were nothing but mere cheats, or else this poor witch would never have been so much frightened. I never saw any satisfactory evidence that persons ever had, or can possibly have, evil spirits under their command, and by which they were capable of doing mischief. Many such stories, which have been best attested, have been found nothing but frauds; and all the rest may reasonably be suspected, because there does not appear any good end that they can answer. It is remarkable, that none have appeared among us since the act which was made against them was repealed; and very probably there never will be any more. For a man to pretend to it under the Jewish law, was death. And such persons

pression on Saul, who had paid so little regard to him whilst living; and to reprove him for his former crimes, especially this last. And how could God have taken a more effectual method to discountenance such a practice? Had there been no answer, or had Saul only been frightened by this wicked woman, their faith in this wretched creature might have been confirmed. But when he caused Samuel to appear in his own person, and declare, what none but infinite wisdom could reveal, it was a remarkable way of showing his detestation of such practices, and a strong proof of the immortality of the soul. If it be asked, Why did not Samuel exhort him to repent? I answer, the reproof itself is an exhortation: but probably there was no room for repentance, after all that had been said to him, and done for him.

deserve severe punishment now, because it tends to lessen a regard to Providence, and to introduce impiety.

With regard to apparitions, this story seems to me to prove, that God, for wise and good reasons, may suffer departed spirits to take some vehicle or light kind of body, by which they may become the objects of sense, and be capable of conversing with us. Such instances I believe have been; yet never but on extraordinary occasions. The great thing to be regarded is the design or the end to be answered by such an appearance, for Providence never acts but for a wise and good end; and if that was not to be seen by us, why was the apparition? God does not take delight in terrifying men; and not one of them can appear without his permission. This single remark carried with us, would overthrow a thousand of those foolish stories, which tend only to frighten children. But we have no need to give ourselves any pain about this, if we will but attend to the next reflection which this chapter suggests to us.

2. We see here the horrors of a guilty conscience, and how solicitous we should be to make God our friend. When the Philistines came against Saul, he remembered the guilty blood of the Amalekites which he had spared, and the innocent blood of the priests which he had shed. His iniquities were set in order before him. This drove him in the wild disorder of his mind to consult a witch. He who would not serve God, became a slave to his own fears and folly. When he heard his doom confirmed by the same prophet who had delivered it before, what remorse and despair, what horror of conscience, what terror and anticipation of the divine vengeance did he feel! What a dreadful situation must his mind be in! from which his crown and sceptre, his dominions and armies could not secure him. God grant that we may all learn from this awful story, the evil of sin, the sad consequence of combating with conscience, grieving the Spirit of God, and causing him to withdraw. May we never provoke the Lord to anger, lest he give us up to a hard and reprobate mind. Let us secure an interest in his friendship, by faith in Christ, and holy obedience to his will; and then, evil spirits can do us no harm, and good spirits will not. *Happy is he that feareth the Lord, for he shall be satisfied from himself;* and instead of terror, remorse, and despair, his life shall be comfortable and *his end shall be peace.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

In this chapter we find David in great straits, and happily delivered by the interposition of Providence.

1 NOW the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which [is] in Jezreel. 2 And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands, *some at the head of an hundred, and some of a thousand soldiers:* but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish, *who was chosen general of the whole army, and David went with him as captain of his guards, according to his promise.* 3 Then said the princes of the Philistines, What [do] these Hebrews [here?] *thinking it odd that they should go against their own countrymen.* And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, [Is] not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, *a year and four months, long enough to prove him,* and I have found no fault in him since he fell [unto me] unto this day? 4 And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him *at Ziklag,* and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us, *should prove false and revolt:* for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? [should it] not [be] with the heads of these men? *by betraying us into the hands of Saul? This was a plausible reason, but the chief was, envy and indignation at his reputation, and seeing him so honourably treated.* 5 [Is] not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands? *reminding Achish that he was a very dangerous person, and would hardly forfeit his popularity by fighting against his country.*

6 Then Achish, *who was overruled in the council of war,* called David, and said unto him, Surely, [as] the LORD liveth*, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in

* Achish swears *as the Lord liveth,* and not by Dagon: perhaps, David, who *spoke of God's testimonies before kings,* had instructed him in the knowledge of Jehovah.

the host [is] good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day; *a very honourable testimony:* nevertheless the lords favour thee not. 7 Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines. 8 And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? *David, though inwardly pleased, would not have Achish imagine he wanted to be dismissed.* And Achish, *knowing that all things had been well managed by him, and prospered in his hand,* answered and said to David, I know that thou [art] good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle: *and he thought it was better to lose a favourite, than to have a mutiny in the army.* 10 Wherefore, now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart. 11 So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel. *This was ordered by God's special providence, to preserve him either from fighting against his own people, or betraying his trust; as also that he might come seasonably to the rescue of his friends at Ziklag, and his own concerns.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It is sometimes injurious even to have high reputation. This should teach us not to be too fond of honour, or the applause of men, for it exposed David to the envy and hatred of the Philistine lords. Popular applause may soon be turned to reproach; therefore while we behave honourably, and have the testimony of a good conscience, let us not be over solicitous about the applause of men.

2. We may see, by this remarkable appearance of Providence in David's favour, that *the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* He knew not what to do; he could not desert without imputation of cowardice, treachery, and ingratitude to his benefactor; and yet it was hard to fight against his country, and the Lord's anointed, and would exasperate the Israelites against him. He was under no engagements but to defend Achish; perhaps

he would have done that as captain of his guard; and perhaps he might have saved Jonathan's life, and accommodated matters between the contending parties. He was much wanted at home, though he did not know it. In this difficulty God appeared for him, by stirring up the Philistine lords against him, and suffering them to indulge and succeed in their resentment. David's honourable dismission freed him from all these difficulties, just time enough to save his wives and children, and substance. His mind was undoubtedly much distressed, and God suffered this to chastise his folly in going to the Philistines; but because his heart was right, he interposed to rescue him, and his disgrace proved greatly to his advantage. This affords us encouragement to trust in God in all our straits and difficulties, for he can find out ways and means to rescue us, and even stir up our enemies to deliver us out of this or the other evil, from which our friends cannot. *In all our ways,* therefore, *let us acknowledge him, and he will direct our paths.*

CHAPTER XXX.

We read here of the distressed circumstances in which David and his men found Ziklag on their return; his pursuit of the enemy; the recovery of their families and effects; and the distribution of the spoil.

1 AND it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; 2 And had taken the women captives, that [were] therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried [them] away, and went on their way*. 3 So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, [it was] burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. 4 Then David and the people that [were] with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. 5 And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. *This was indeed a heavy*

* It was strange they did not destroy them, as David had done their wives and children. There was however a remarkable providence in it, as they did not stop till they got to the borders of their own country: then they staid to refresh themselves, and rejoice in their victory.

trial. They had just escaped Saul's fury, and got safe from the Philistines, and expected to meet their wives and children with joy; but, behold, all were lost. We can scarce imagine any thing more melancholy. 6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters; *their grief for a time took away their reason, and they ascribed all their miseries to him for having attacked the Amalekites:* but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God, *his piety kept up his courage. He had a great command of temper, did not threaten to punish their insolence, but remained silent under all their ill usage.* 7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. *In the day of his trouble he sought the Lord.* 8 And David inquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake [them,] and without fail recover [all.] *God answered, and for his encouragement, promised more than he required.*

9 So David went, he and the six hundred men that [were] with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. 10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor; *their grief had made them neglect to take proper refreshment. This was a great trial of David's faith, as it took from him a third part of his army; yet he showed them great tenderness, and though the case was urgent, did not hurry them beyond their strength.* 11 And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water. 12 And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him; *they did what they could to recover and comfort him,* for he had eaten no bread nor drank [any] water, three days and three nights, *that is, part of three days and three nights.* 13 And David said unto him, To whom [belongest] thou? and whence [art] thou? And he said, I [am] a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite: and my master left me, because three days agone I fell sick. *This was the highest degree of inhumanity and cruelty; he left him sick, in an enemy's country, destitute of necessaries, when they had plenty, and with their camels could easily have taken him with them.* 14 We made an invasion [upon] the south of the Cherethites, *the*

Philistines, and upon [the coast] which [belongeth] to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb, *his inheritance, where Nabal's possessions were*, and we burned Ziglag with fire. 15 And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, *of whose cruelty he had a sufficient specimen*, and I will bring thee down to this company.

16 And when he had brought him down, behold, [they were] spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah; *here they thought themselves perfectly secure, because the Philistines and Israelites were gone to war.* 17 And David *came upon them early in the morning, and* smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. 18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. 19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any [thing] that they had taken to them: David recovered all, *according to God's word.* 20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, *taken by the Amalekites from the Philistines and the men of Judah*, [which] they drave before those [other] cattle, *belonging to David and the men of Ziklag*, and said, This [is] David's spoil, *obtained by his valour and conduct. The soldiers now repented of their insolence, and were willing David should have all the new spoils that were taken.* 21 And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that [were] with him, *to congratulate them on their success, and receive their wives and children;* and when David came near to the people, he saluted them, *in a most friendly manner inquired about their health, for he had left them weak and faint.*

22 Then answered all the wicked men and [men] of Belial, of those that went with David, *properly so called, because they were covetous and barbarous; probably David when he saluted the two hundred men, told them they should have their own things restored, and part of the spoil; but these wicked men objected*, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them [aught] of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his

children, that they may lead [them] away, and depart. 23 Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. 24 For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part [is] that goeth down to the battle, so [shall] his part [be] that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike*. 25 And it was [so] from that day forward, that he made it a *perpetual* statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day†.

26 And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, [even] to his friends‡, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD; 27 To [them] which [were] in Beth-el, and to [them] which [were] in south Ramoth, and to [them] which [were] in Jattir, 28 And to [them] which [were] in Aroer, and to [them] which [were] in Siphmoth, and to [them which [were] in Eshtemoa, 29 And to [them] which [were] in Rachal, and to [them] which [were] in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to [them] which [were] in the cities of the Kenites, 30 And to [them] which [were] in Hormah, and to [them] which [were] in Chor-ashan, and to [them] which [were] in Athach, 31 And to [them] which [were] in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt; *to the friends among whom they had lurked, and from whom they had received intelligence and provisions. He sent these presents, as a token that he wished them prosperity, in gratitude for their kindness, and as a means of securing their affection.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE here a striking instance of the uncertainty of all created comfort. Little did David and his men think of so melancholy a sight. Being dismissed from the army, they were highly delighted with the thoughts of rejoicing with their families and

* David over-ruled their cruel proposal, yet in a friendly manner; and argued, that since God had been so good to them, it would be peculiarly base and impious in them to be unkind to their brethren. He reasoned from the equity of the thing; they were left behind by common consent, were part of the same body, and might have been serviceable in case of a retreat.

† Ps. lxviii. 12, may possibly allude to this.

‡ The Amalekites were a rich, luxurious, effeminate people, (Judges viii. 24, 26.), and David sent part of the jewels and other spoils to the elders of Judah, and other friends, lest his men should grow effeminate by using them.

friends. But what a dreadful scene opened to their view! When we go abroad, we know not what occurrence may happen before we return; we may go out cheerful, and return doleful; our houses may be destroyed and turned into ashes; wives, children, and friends may be dead. Those who have often gone out and come in, and found their families in peace at their return, should be thankful to God for his preserving care. Let us always consider such enjoyments as precarious; and *boast not of to-morrow, since we know not what a day may bring forth.*

2. Let good men learn of David, to encourage themselves in the Lord their God, in the most distressing circumstances. His grief was as great as theirs, and additional troubles fell upon him through their insolence and outrage. He was charged as the author of all this mischief; but he encouraged himself in the power and providence of God, who had often appeared for him, and had promised to bring him to the throne; the recollection of this kept up his spirits. Let us all seek an interest in God as our God, then shall we have a sure refuge when trouble comes. Good men should not be cast down, but hope in God. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings whose heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.*

3. The cruelty of the Amalekite to his poor servant, should fill our minds with abhorrence of every degree of cruelty, even to the meanest servant and dependant. Those have the spirit of Amalekites, and not Israelites, who forsake their servants in distress, and turn them sick into the wide world, or take no care of them when old and disabled. *A merciful man regardeth the life* even *of his beast,* much more of his fellow-creature; but *the tender mercies of the wicked are cruelty.* Humanity and compassion are graces well becoming christians, especially those in higher stations of life. May we therefore *put on, as the elect of God, bowels of compassion.*

4. See how soon destruction may come upon those who seem most secure and most merry. The Amalekites were all cheerful and jovial, eating, and drinking, and dancing; they expected no danger to be near, when the blow came upon them and destroyed them almost all. Such is the case of sensual sinners; they apprehend no danger, and put far off the evil day. Eating, drinking, and dancing, have been the soft and pleasant ways by which multitudes have gone down to the congregation of the dead; and when they said *peace and safety, lo! sudden destruction came upon them.* Let us then always be upon our guard, for while we indulge sensual inclinations, our spiritual enemies will gain an ad-

vantage over us. Let us *take heed to ourselves, lest our hearts be at any time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, or the cares of this life, and that awful day come upon us unawares.*

CHAPTER XXXI.

Saul having lost his army, and his sons being slain, he and his armour-bearer kill themselves, and the Philistines triumph over the dead carcases.

1 NOW *Saul had no sooner returned to the camp at Gilboa, than* the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons, *who commanded the army, supposing that if these were despatched they would not rally again,* and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons. *By this a wise Providence made way for David's settlement; for Jonathan had many friends, and might have been a great hinderance to his peaceful establishment.* 3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. 4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, *having no hope of escape,* Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me, *make sport with me, as they did with Samson.* But his armourbearer *had so much respect for him that he* would not; for he was sore afraid: therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword and died with him. 6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, *his household servants and guard,* that same day together.

7 And when the men of Israel that [were] on the other side of the valley *of Jezreel,* and [they] that [were] on the other side Jordan, *rather, on this side Jordan, as the word may be rendered,* saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons

fallen in mount Gilboa. 9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish [it in] the house of their idols, and among the people. *They sent both the head and the armour, as we read in* 1 Chron. x. 10., *to inform the people of the victory, and to be hung up as a trophy of it in the temple of Dagon.* 10 And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body *and the bodies of his sons* to the wall of Beth-shan, *exposing them to public shame.* 11 And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; 12 All the valiant men arose, and, *in return for the kindness he had done them,* (ch. xi. 11.), went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and *because their flesh was putrefied, and so could not be embalmed, and to prevent the Philistines getting them again into their power, they* burned them there. 13 And they took their bones, and buried [them] under a tree at Jabesh, *where they lay till the end of David's reign, when he buried them in the sepulchre of Kish, the father of Saul;* and *they* fasted seven days, *that is, till the evening of each day, out of respect to Saul. Thus ended the history of this unhappy monarch.* See Hosea xiii. 10, 11.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We may here observe the horrors of a guilty conscience, and the miserable end of a a self-deceiving sinner. Saul had a long combat with himself; his doom had been foretold by Samuel's apparition; and he is here brought to a miserable end. Every aggravating circumstance attended it; full of horror and despair, he basely and cowardly destroys himself, and all to keep his body from being abused by the Philistines. There was no sign of care about his soul; he died as he had lived, a terror to himself and all about him. Now his many sins find him out. See here the consequence of disobedience to God's commandments, and his righteous judgments upon one of the greatest of men, when he proved profligate and perverse. It is a warning to us, that we may *fear the Lord, and walk in the way of his commandments.*

2. Victory and success should always be ascribed to God. So the Philistines thought, though theirs were such poor gods that they did not know what was done a few miles off. This shows the sense men have of the reasonableness of acts of public

homage to their supposed deliverers. Whatever success we meet with, we should say, *Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name be the glory.*

3. Respect is due to the remains of the dead, especially deceased princes. A concern to rescue the remains of Saul and his sons, was for the honour of Israel. In general, the relation between kings and their people is so intimate, that the disgrace of the one is a reflection on the other. If these men were so resolute, and undertook so hazardous an expedition, to rescue their dead bodies from shame, how willing should we be to hazard our fortunes or lives for the person or reputation of a good king, under whose shelter we are safe and happy. Finally,

4. We may learn this useful lesson, *not to put our trust in princes. I said, ye are gods, but ye shall die as men.* They not only die, but often die miserably. *Happy is the man who hath the God of Jacob for his help, who trusts in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.*

THE

SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL,

CALLED BY THE SEVENTY

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS.

INTRODUCTION.

It is called the Second Book of Samuel, because it gives an account of the fulfilment of what he foretold. It is the history of David's reign, and contains a period of about forty years. The author was very probably Nathan or Gad. See 1 Chron. xxix. 29.

CHAPTER I.

In which we have the intelligence of Saul's death brought to David; the manner in which he received it; and the noble elegy he composed on the occasion.

1 NOW it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag; 2 It came even to pass on the third day, that behold a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head, *in the habit of a mourner:* and [so] it was, when he came to David that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. 3 And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. 4 And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also; *he only mentioned Saul and Jonathan, as the persons about whom David was chiefly concerned.* 5 And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul

and Jonathan his son be dead*? 6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear, *endeavouring to run himself through with it;* and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. 7 And when he looked behind him, *to see if any of his guards were near*, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here [am] I. 8 And he said unto me, Who [art] thou? And I answered him, I [am] an Amalekite. 9 He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me, *add thy force, that the spear may enter in;* for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me, *or, as the margin renders it, my coat of mail, or my embroidered coat, hindereth me, so that my life is yet whole within me.* 10 So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen; *he probably saw indignation rising in David's countenance, and therefore adds, that he did it out of pity and kindness:* and I took the crown that [was] upon his head, and the bracelet that [was] on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord†.

11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that [were] with him: 12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword‡.

13 And David, *when the transport of his grief was over,* said unto the young man that told him, Whence [art] thou? and he answered, I [am] the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. 14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD's anointed? 15 And David called one of the young men *of his guard,* and said, Go near, [and] fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. 16 And David said unto him, Thy blood [be] upon thy head: for thy

* He asks this, because it was not so easy to know who were slain in the confusion of a battle, and it was a matter of great moment to be satisfied in this.

† Saul was the first who wore these ensigns of royalty; and it is hardly probable that he wore them in battle. They might either be carried by some who attended him, or be left in his tent, which the Amalekites no doubt plundered. It is observable, that he mentions nothing particular concerning Jonathan's death; as knowing that would be a disagreeable subject to David.

‡ The Amalekite expected to have some considerable reward, but he was greatly disappointed, *see ch.* iv. 10.; instead of seeing transports of joy in David and his men, behold weeping and great lamentation, and many tears, for Saul, and for Jonathan, that generous, brave and worthy man, for the calamities of his countrymen and friends. Consequently, the expressions of desiring the ruin of his enemies, and of triumph over them, were not from a spirit of revenge, but predictions that it should be so.

mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD's anointed *.

17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul, and over Jonathan his son †: 18 Also he bade them teach the children of Judah [the use of] the bow ‡: behold, [it is] written in the book of Jasher;) *probably a book or historical poem containing the memorable events of the nation.* 19 The beauty of Israel, *the flower of the nation,* is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! *how suddenly and dreadfully are they slain! He knew the enemies would triumph, and therefore adds, in a beautiful apostrophe,* 20 Tell [it] not in Gath, publish [it] not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph; *he wishes if possible to conceal it, for the honour of God; lest even the women should rejoice, and celebrate their idol gods as the authors of it.* 21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, [let there be] no dew, neither [let there be] rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings. *He utters an execration on the mountain where the battle was fought: let there be no rain upon it; no fruitful fields, from whence tithes and offerings shall be brought to God's house; let it remain barren, and be a sad and woful monument of this calamity:* for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away. *That they might run the faster;* the shield of Saul, [as though he had] not [been] anointed with oil, *as if he had been a common soldier, and not a king* §. 22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty; *Saul and Jonathan were used to be victorious over their stoutest enemies.* 23 Saul and

* Though this account was false, (*see* 1 *Sam.* xxxi. 5.), yet David knew it not then, and might reasonably suppose him guilty on his own confession; it was therefore a very proper step, being just in itself, and necessary to vindicate his own innocence; for had he rewarded him, or suffered him to go unpunished, it might have been said that he had employed him. It was necessary to ingratiate himself with the people, and deter others from such practices, and to secure respect to the person of kings, especially the Lord's anointed. It is remarkable, that an Amalekite should bring that crown, which Saul had forfeited by sparing the Amalekites.

† This elegy discovers a fine genius, and an excellent spirit; it is written in verse in the original, that it might be more affecting, and better and longer remembered.

‡ This verse comes in as a parenthesis. David might think the defeat of the Israelites was occasioned by the want of more bows; especially as the Philistines were very skilful archers; the children of Judah lived next to them, and therefore it was proper for them to learn the use of the bow.

§ David probably refers here to the spoil of Saul's dead body, and to the indignation and joy with which the enemy tore off his armour, and set it up as a trophy.

Jonathan [were] lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided; *they were courteous and kind to the people, loved one another and the nation; Jonathan stuck close to him till death, which proves that there was no conspiracy against Saul:* they were swifter than eagles *in pursuing their enemy,* they were stronger than lions *in overthrowing them.* 24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with [other] delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel, *adorned you with the spoils taken from the enemy.* 25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, [thou wast] slain in thine high places, *in the high places of thy own country, which thou hadst so valiantly defended.* 26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women; *here his grief for Jonathan breaks out again in an abrupt manner, whose love to him was as sincere, ardent, and delightful, as the highest conjugal affection.* 27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished! *This was the burden of the song; how are the mighty fallen, and the military glory departed from Israel*!*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We may observe, that worldly-minded men are apt to measure the minds of others by their own. This Amalekite thought David would be glad to be informed that he had killed Saul, his inveterate enemy, with his own hand; but more especially to see the crown which he brought with him, and expected that he would have amply rewarded him. Thus men of base and sordid minds think others are like themselves; and those who are most ready to cast reflections on the temper or conduct of others, have often more of the very temper and conduct which they censure so freely.

2. We learn from the example of David, to conceal the faults of others, especially of those who are dead. In this elegy we meet not with the least trace of Saul's cruelty to him; he remembered nothing but the brave man, the valiant commander, the magnificent prince, God's anointed, his once indulgent master, his Michal's and his Jonathan's father. He said nothing

* It is impossible to do justice to this fine poem. Dr. Watts's is the best version, and comes nearest the spirit of the original. See Watts's *Miscellanies.*

of his disobedience, or his acts of tyranny. He did not insult him now his honour was laid in the dust, and his crown fallen from his head. Thus acted *the man after God's own heart*. We may judge then what they are, who forget all the virtues of wise and good men, who are either living or dead; who rake together their faults, and pour out censures on their heads or their ashes. Charity should teach us to say the best of every one. If we know no good, let us say nothing; but cover their faults with a mantle of love. We must *speak evil of no man*.

3. Pity and tender affection is no way inconsistent with true courage and firmness of mind. David's heart melted within him; all the tender passions of his soul were affected at once, and burst forth into these elegant but melancholy strains; and while he shows a heart impressed with the strongest emotions of affection and grief, he displays a most martial and courageous spirit. A compassionate temper is not a contemptible weakness; the poem before us, compared with the whole of David's conduct, shows it. The celebrated Mr. Addison, who was an excellent judge of human nature, being told that a soldier wept at a moving scene in his Cato, said, 'He will fight never the worse for that; it is a sign he is a brave man.' We should all cultivate a tender and an affectionate disposition in ourselves, and especially in our children; for without this we cannot possibly be happy in relative life. A greater than David hath set us an example of this, even the Son of God; whom it is our glory, and will be our highest happiness, to resemble.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter we have an account of David being made king in Judah, and of another king set up by Abner; which occasioned a civil war; but at length a cessation of arms is agreed upon.

1 AND it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, *by Abiathar the high priest*, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron, *the principal city which lay in the middle of the tribe*. 2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite. 3 And

his men that [were] with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron, *where he provided for them according to their merits and his ability.* 4 And the *principal* men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah*: And, *upon inquiring after the body of Saul,* they told David, saying [That] the men of Jabesh-gilead [were they] that buried Saul. *This was his first royal act, and it showed both his prudence and piety.*

5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed [be] ye of the LORD, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, [even] unto Saul, and have buried him. 6 And now the LORD show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing†. 7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them; *fear not any evil from me, for I am so far from bearing you any ill-will for your kindness to Saul, that I esteem myself for that reason bound to protect you, and hope for the same friendship and allegiance to me.*

8 But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, *the general of the army and Saul's relation,* took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim‡; 9 And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel; *many of the Israelites were brought over to him out of the rest of the tribes.* 10 Ish-bosheth Saul's son [was] forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years§. 11 But the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

* No doubt they had taken measures to have an unanimous election; but that failing, they appointed him king over their own tribe only: they did not pretend to determine for all Israel. On this occasion many thousands came to him, as we read in Chronicles.

† He not only prays that God may reward them, but does it himself; and promises to defend them from the Philistines, if they should come to punish them for entering on their city and taking away the trophies of their victory.

‡ Abner knew that David was designed by God's appointment for the kingdom, ch. iii. 9., nevertheless he set up another in hopes of the chief command, and out of envy and personal pique to David, who had bantered him about his care of Saul. Ish-bosheth was a weak man, and Abner intended he should have the name of king, but that he himself should have the government. He set him up at a great distance beyond Jordan.

§ It was two years before there were any hostilities between the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

12 And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon, *to make war against David.* 13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah, *who was David's sister, (therefore Joab was his nephew, and the chief commander),* and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool*. 14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us; *let a certain number of our choice soldiers try their skill in handling their weapons, and encounter one another, which may be a kind of diversion to us; Abner intended by this to dishearten David's men.* And Joab said, Let them arise. 15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which [pertained] to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David, *of known and approved valour.* 16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and [thrust] his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together†: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, *that is, the field of strong men,* which [is] in Gibeon; *and the consequence was, that both armies were exasperated.* 17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

18 And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel [was as] light of foot as a wild roe, *very swift and strong.* 19 And Ahasel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner, *he was intent on killing the greatest man in Israel, and so to put an end to the war.* 20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, [Art] thou Asahel? And he answered, I [am.] 21 And Abner *gave him fair warning of his danger, and* said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and, *that you may not return without spoil,* take thee his armour, *do not venture to engage an old soldier.* But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him. 22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother? *Abner knew Joab was a fierce, revengeful*

* It is probable Joab had orders from David not to overtake them, but to act on the defensive; having sworn to Saul that he would not cut off his seed.

† It has been generally thought, that all the twenty-four were slain; but I rather think, that David's twelve men slew the others, and that not one of them were slain.

man; he probably imagined that he should want Joab's assistance to make friends with David. 23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner, *by a back stroke,* with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth [rib,] that the spear came out behind him, and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, [that] as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still, *fearing to share the same fate, or to take care of the dead body.* 24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner, *not knowing of their brother's death:* and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that [lieth] before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill; *they rallied and stood in a body as if they would renew the fight.* 26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end*? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren, *children of the same father, who worship the same God?* 27 And Joab said, [As] God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, *made that challenge,* (ver. 14.), *and thereby provoked us to fight,* surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother, *marched home again in peace, without bloodshed.* 28 So Joab blew a trumpet, *sounded a retreat,* and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more. 29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim, *not choosing to halt near an army who had beaten them.* 30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel, *a very small number; therefore it is the more probable the twelve men above-mentioned were not slain.* 31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, [so that] three hundred and threescore men died; *this was not a great loss for a conquered army, but probably David had given orders to avoid bloodshed.* 32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which [was in] Beth-lehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day, *and gave David an account of the action.*

* What in the morning he called playing, he now calls devouring. Whoever conquers in civil war, the nation loses.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We may infer, that it will be our wisdom and duty to follow the leadings of Providence. David was designed for the throne, but instead of hastily summoning the Israelites when Saul was dead, he inquired of the Lord. Thus should we seek direction, even in prosperity, when second causes smile, and things go on happily. *In all our ways we should acknowledge God, and he will direct our paths.*

2. *The race is not* always *to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.* Abner's confidence was soon defeated, nor could Asahel's swiftness save him. Let this abate our confidence in any accomplishment: for many are betrayed by those excellencies which they are most fond of; and their defeats and disappointments are grievous in proportion to their pride and vanity. May we cultivate humility and moderation, and not depend too much upon any advantage we may have above others. Let not any man *think more highly of himself than he ought to think;* let not the young man glory in his youth, *nor the strong man in his strength; but let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.*

3. It is a maxim of true wisdom not to begin any important affair, without considering the consequences which may ensue. Had Abner attended to this, he had not been defeated; but he saw his folly when it was too late. He might have known, that it would be bitterness in the end, and therefore should not have given the challenge. The event of things often alters men's opinions. This may be applied to civil war, and to all contentions and differences: when once begun we know not where they will end, but they certainly will produce bitterness. This is true of every sin. If men would consider the remorse of conscience which attends it, the loss of reputation and comfort, and what is of infinitely greater consequence, the loss of their souls, surely they would not be so easily led into sinful practices. God hath made us capable of looking forward, of considering what will be the consequence of things, and where they will end; and by neglecting this, we run ourselves into innumerable sorrows. Let us then always remember that sin *will be bitterness in the end;* that *at the last it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.* May we therefore *stand in awe, and sin not.*

CHAPTER III.

We have here an account of David's family, and of Abner's revolt from Ish-bosheth; his league with David; his attempt to bring the Israelites to submit to David; of his murder by Joab; and the respect and funeral honours which David paid him.

1 NOW there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker; *there were many skirmishes between them, but David got the better, and many forsook Abner and came over to him.*

2 And unto David were sons born in Hebron; and his first born was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; 3 And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom, the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; 4 And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; 5 And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife*. These were born to David in Hebron.

6 And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul; *he went through the tribes of Israel, endeavouring to establish the interest of Ish-bosheth.* 7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name [was] Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and [Ish-bosheth] said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine? *He perceived that he was aspiring to the throne, and had taken this step to strengthen his interest, and to give him an opportunity of throwing off the mask when he became strong enough.* 8 Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said, [Am] I a dog's head, *such a mean, contemptible creature,* which against Judah do show kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to-day with a fault concerning this woman? *that thou shouldst think it a disgrace to thy family for me to lie with thy father's concubine?* 9 So do God to Abner,

* Some are of opinion this was Michal; though she had no child after the contempt she showed to David, yet she might have had before that time.

and more also, except as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him; 10 To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba. *This is a most shameful speech. It shows that he fought against his king and his conscience in opposing David; and now declares, that as he had raised Ish-bosheth to the throne, he would pull him down again.* 11 And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him, *and was unwilling to provoke him.*

12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose [is] the land? saying [also,] Make thy league with me, *give me honourable terms,* and, behold, my hand [shall be] with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee. 13 And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face*. 14 And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver [me] my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines. 15 And Ish-bosheth, *who durst not refuse, lest Abner should forsake him,* sent, and took her from [her] husband, [even] from Phaltiel the son of Laish. 16 And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

17 And Abner *went back to persuade the Israelites to submit to David, and* had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past [to be] king over you; *after the death of Goliath, and when Saul and Jonathan were dead, had there been no other competitor, you would have chosen him.* 18 Now then do [it:] for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies; *he reminds them of the divine oracle, probably delivered by Samuel, and urges the propriety of their doing it, as the Philistines were so troublesome to them.* 19 And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin, *which was his own tribe*†:* and Abner

* David consented to a league upon this reasonable condition, that Michal, his first and beloved wife, who had hazarded her life to save his, and who now lived in adultery, should be restored to him. This was a prudent step, to ingratiate himself with the Israelites. Abner probably told him that he must apply to Ish-bosheth, and that he would second the message.

† Here he went from family to family, and not only to the elders, as of the other tribes, because they were most attached to the house of Saul.

went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin; *he informed David how the people stood affected to him, and so effectually brought over Benjamin, that they never forsook him afterwards.* 20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him, *to bring Michal.* And David made Abner, and the men that [were] with him a feast, *in token of kindness, and as a confirmation of the league of friendship.* 21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise, and go, and will gather all *the chief men of* Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

22 And, behold, the servants of David and Joab, came from [pursuing] a troop *of the Philistines, or some other enemies of Israel,* and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner [was] not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace. 23 When Joab and all the host that [was] with him were come, they, *that is, some of the officious courtiers,* told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace. 24 Then Joab, *full of pride for his late success,* came to the king, and, *in the most insolent manner,* said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why [is] it [that] thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? *Intimating that David was a weak and credulous man, and did not understand his true interest.* 25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest, *that he may take advantage of it: then, without waiting for an answer, he went out.* 26 And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, *in the king's name,* which brought him again from the well of Sirah; but David knew [it] not. 27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly; *pretended secret business,* and smote him there under the fifth [rib,] that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother *.

28 And afterward when David heard [it,] he said, I and my

* Joab's pretence for doing this was fidelity to the king, and care for his interest, and also for the murder of his brother Asahel, though that was in open war, and Abner would have avoided it if he could. But probably the true motive was ambition; he thought Abner would have great influence with David, for bringing in all Israel, and he feared so powerful a rival.

kingdom [are] guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner. 29 Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread. *He first appealed to God for his innocence, and trusted that neither he nor his kingdom should suffer for it; then uttered a prophetic curse, that the guilt might rest on the head of the murderer and his family.* 30 So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. *The murder was plotted between them, and Abishai was ready to assist if there had been occasion.*

31 And David *ordered the whole court to go into mourning, and* said to Joab, *to make him sensible of his sin, and weaken his interest in the hearts of the people,* and *likewise* to all the people that [were] with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David [himself] followed the bier, *attended as chief mourner.* 32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. 33 And the king lamented over Abner *in a funeral oration,* and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? *Should Abner have died like a fool, like a coward? what a pity so valiant a man is come to such an end!* 34 Thy hands [were] not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters; *he was not a prisoner, yet he could not help himself:* as a man falleth before wicked *treacherous* men, [so] fellest thou; *he was not overcome in an honourable manner, but fell by secret treachery, as the best of men may do. This was probably said in the presence of Joab, to humble and mortify him.* And all the people wept again over him. 35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down; *he resolved to keep a strict fast on this mournful occasion.* 36 And all the people took notice [of it,] and it pleased them *to see the king so much affected:* as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people; *by his carriage herein he gained so great an interest in the people's affections, that they put the best construction upon all his words and actions.* 37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day *by his grief,* that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner, *that he neither ordered it, consented to it, nor approved of it.* 38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great

man fallen this day in Israel*? 39 And I [am] this day weak, *in an unsettled condition as yet*, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah [be] too hard for me, *have too much interest, especially among the soldiers, for me to punish and break with him; I must leave this to God:* the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IN Abner we see the fatal effects of pride and ambition. It was these tempted him to revolt; he could not bear reproof. Pride also tempted Joab to murder Abner; he could not bear a rival. To what treachery, and often villany, do the pride and ambition of men lead them! Let it be our endeavour to cultivate an humble spirit, and not to mind high things. *Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not; for with the lowly is wisdom,* and safety and happiness.

2. How odious is it to make religion the tool of policy! Abner had no more religion than most ministers of state have; yet how godly does he talk when he would gain over Israel. He had no regard to the oracle of God before; but when it would serve his turn, he quoted it, and urged upon the people a regard to it. Who would have expected to hear such good words out of Abner's mouth. He showed no signs of godliness, till his ambition and revenge led him to it. O, how abominable is it to cloak selfish views with the name of God. This is the way of hypocrites in general, *they have God near to their mouths, but it is far from their thoughts* to honour and obey him. Men may thus be deceived, but God cannot. *The hypocrite his soul hateth.*

3. How vain are all the purposes of mortal men! Abner now thought himself of the most consequence, considered himself as the hinge upon which the affairs of Israel turned; that he had influence enough to bring about a great revolution; yet he was not secure of his own life even an hour. In the midst of his towering expectations he died by the hand of treachery, and all his deep projects and high prospects fell at once. Hence we learn, not to put our trust even in princes, nor to be too confident

* His courtiers probably thought that he bewailed his fall too much; he therefore tells them, they were not sufficiently sensible of the loss, of Abner's birth, his power, authority, and valour, and what service he had been of to him and Israel.

in our own schemes; for honour is but a vapour, and the stoutest, the most prudent, yea, the best of men, may be cut off on a sudden. Let us labour to secure something that cannot be taken from us; be firm in our purposes for God and religion: relying on his providence, let us say of the Lord, *He is my buckler and my shield, in him will I trust.*

4. We may justly lament the fall of great and honourable men, whatever their private characters may be. Abner had been faithful to Saul, and had great abilities for public services, had they been well employed; and David lamented his fall. Honour is due to the remains and memory of a man of valour and merit, though he feared not God. But we should especially lament the fall of those who are truly great, great in the sight of God and all good men. Considering the loss which the public will sustain; all respect is due to their remains; *the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*

CHAPTER IV.

In which we have an account of the barbarous murder of Ishbosheth, and the punishment of the murderers, by David.

1 AND when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble; *having lost his counsellor and general, his spirits and courage failed him:* and all the Israelites were troubled, *lest they should be embroiled in new wars.*

2 And Saul's son had two men [that were] captains of bands, *the captains of his guard; persons of his tribe, whom he had advanced and placed confidence in:* the name of the one [was] Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin: 3 And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day*.) 4 And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son [that was] lame of [his] feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of

* The Benjamites possessed it: but when Saul was slain they fled to Gittaim, and the Philistines got possession of it. This was formerly a city of the Gibeonites, (Joshua ix. 17.), who having been destroyed by Saul, he gave the city to his relations; and it is remarkable, that two men of the city who succeeded the Gibeonites, cut off Saul's son, the only stay and hope of his house.

Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name [was] Mephibosheth*. 5 And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon, *according to the custom in hot climates.* 6 And they came thither into the midst of the house, [as though] they would have fetched wheat, *that is, corn for the soldiers, who were maintained at the king's expense;* and they smote him under the fifth [rib:] and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. 7 For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night; *now Abner was dead, and Ish-bosheth's kingdom in a tottering situation; and but little hopes of advancement from him, they took this step, expecting an ample reward from David.* 8 And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed†.

9 And David answered Rechab and Baanah, his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, [As] the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity‡, 10 When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who [thought] that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: 11 How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person, *who had done them no wrong, but was their friend and patron, and* in his own house upon his bed, *when he suspected no danger?* shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? 12 And David commanded his young men *who were his guards,* and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged [them]

* This is mentioned as what emboldened these two men to put Ish-bosheth to death. Mephibosheth was now only twelve years of age, and being lame, was not likely to push for the crown, or avenge his uncle's murder.

† To recommend their service, they put David in mind of Saul's enmity and persecution of him, which they had revenged on his son; and impudently add, *the Lord hath avenged the king,* when it was their own pride and ambition. God had forbidden all treachery and murder, and David resented it with indignation.

‡ David here expresses his gratitude to God for his deliverance, and intimates, that he needed no wicked acts for his preservation and advancement; he then reminds them of what he did to the Amalekite, who slew Saul at his own desire, and when he was wounded. Probably they had heard of this, but thought David would not resent it, as Ish-bosheth was a usurper, and not the Lord's anointed.

up over the pool in Hebron, *in a public place, to testify his abhorrence of the action.* But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried [it] in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron, *a sepulchre which David had made to honour the memory of Abner.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. The unhappy accident which happened to Mephibosheth, may remind us of the dangers to which infants are exposed, and should make us thankful for the use of our limbs. His nurse apprehended the Philistines would seek for him, and she fled in a fright, and dropped her charge. To such accidents are little ones exposed; nor are the children of great and good men free from such dangers. What reason have we to be thankful for all our near escapes from death, and for the preservation of our bones; that none of them are broken, or rendered useless, or less useful than they otherwise would have been. It is God who holds us up from the womb, and preserves us through the feeble and dangerous state of infancy; *all our bones* therefore *should say, Who is like unto thee, O Lord.*

2. Let the recollection of God's kindness to us, prevent us from taking any unlawful methods for our own security and advancement, or being pleased with others who do it for us. David depended upon God, and found him kind and faithful. He would not be beholden to any man, especially when taking such unjustifiable methods to serve him. He who has observed the divine care, and seeks deliverance from heaven, needs not the aid of treachery: *he that believeth will not make haste.*

3. We may observe the righteous judgment of God on treachery and villany. Little did these captains think death would be the reward for their intelligence. But their evil doings were turned upon their own heads. God abhors bloody and deceitful men, and they should have no countenance from us. Such will be the case of those who think to serve the cause of Christ, the son of David, by war and persecution, by fraud and rapine; who, under colour of religion, murder princes, break solemn contracts, and act deceitfully and treacherously. 'But, (as Mr. Henry observes), however men may canonize such methods of serving Christ and the catholic church, Christ will let them know another day, that christianity was not intended to destroy humanity; and they who think thus to merit heaven, *shall not escape the damnation of hell.*

CHAPTER V.

David is anointed king by all Israel; he takes Jerusalem; and carries on a successful war against the Philistines.

1 THEN came *ambassadors from* all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we [are] thy bone and thy flesh; *this was a reason why they should choose him, and a proof that he was qualified by law, being one of their brethren.* 2 Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel; and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel; *the strongest reason was the divine designation, that he should feed, that is, rule and govern Israel, and watch over them, as a shepherd over his flocks.* 3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; *the ambassadors, having met with such a favourable reception, made their report, and the leading men of authority in every tribe came to make him king:* and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD, *to govern them justly and kindly, according to the law of God, and they to obey him constantly and faithfully, according to that law*;* and they anointed David king over Israel *a third time*†. 4 David [was] thirty years old when he began to reign, [and] he reigned forty years. 5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

And now, being such a numerous army, and having a valiant commander, and their spirits raised by this princely entertainment, they were resolved to undertake some great achievement; 6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land‡: which spake unto David, saying, Ex-

* This was done before the Lord; they bound themselves by this solemn league, by sacrifice, and appeal to God, who was more immediately present in the congregation of Israel.

† The first time was only a designation to the office, and was done privately, (1 Sam. xvi. 13.), the second only over the tribe of Judah, (ch. ii. 4.), this third over all Israel. He was probably anointed by the high priest; and we read, 1 Chron. xii., that upwards of three hundred and forty thousand came together on this occasion, and feasted before the king, with royal magnificence, for three days.

‡ Part of this land, belonging to the tribe of Judah, was taken before, (Judges i. 8.), but the strongest part, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, was not taken

cept thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking David cannot come in hither*. 7 Nevertheless David, *notwithstanding all this boasting*, took the strong hold of Zion: the same [is] the city of David, *he called it after his own name*. 8 And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame, and the blind, [that are] hated of David's soul, [he shall be chief and captain†:] wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house‡. 9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it The city of David; *but not being large enough to contain his court and guards, he added many other buildings.* And David built round about from Millo and inward§. 10 And David went on, and grew great, *or, as the margin reads it, he went going and growing, like a noble river, that swells and enlarges in its progress,* and the LORD God of hosts [was] with him, *enlarged his dominions, and gave him prosperity, reputation, and power.*

11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, *an address of congratulation on his accession and the conquest of Jerusalem;* and, *hearing David was repairing the fort, and enlarging the city, he sent him* cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house‖. 12 And David, *reflecting on*

till now, Judges i. 21. xix. 10, 11. Joshua xvi. 63. David intending to make this his capital, and the centre of unity, determined to attack it, and summoned the city to surrender, according to the law of God.

* Some writers suppose, that this refers to the great strength of their fortification, that they had need only to set up the lame and the blind to defend them. But this is an improbable sense, because David calls them the hated of his soul, to distinguish between them and the Jebusites, *v.* 8. It rather refers to their idols, which they had set on their walls, as the palladium or statue of Pallas, on the walls of Troy. The Israelites were near neighbours, and David and his people might have called them in contempt, *the lame and the blind; who had eyes, but could not see; and hands, but could not handle; and feet, but could not walk.* They retort upon David in their turn, for his reproach upon their religion; as if they had said, As blind as they are, they have eyes to watch us; and as lame as they are, they have hands to defend us.

† When the assault was made he said, as 1 Chron. xi. 6., *Whoever smiteth the Jebusites first, shall be chief and captain, and let him throw into the gutter,* or ditch, *the lame and the blind,* that is, throw down their idol gods: and Joab did this, to regain David's favour.

‡ Or, *because they had said, The blind and the lame* shall hinder him, so that *he shall not be able to take the fort,* that is, our idol gods shall prevent him. Others think it refers to the Jebusites, who being as stupid and senseless as their idols, had said so.

§ Millo was a strong fortress, a royal palace, and armory. The fort was in the centre, the city within the circle, and Millo in the circumference; perhaps that part of the hill which was easiest to attack. It was repaired by Solomon, and afterwards by Hezekiah. It seems to be a general name for any strong fort or bulwark. The cxv. psalm was composed on occasion of this victory.

‖ Tyre was famous for artificers, but the Jews were not, being farmers and graziers.

the providence of God in subduing his enemies, and raising up friends, and recollecting his promise, perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

13 And David took [him] more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David*. 14 And these [be] the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, Ibhar also, 15 And Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 16 And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

17 But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David†, and David heard [of it,] and went down to the hold, *to Adullam, where the army might conveniently assemble.* 18 The Philistines also came and spread themselves *in prodigious numbers* in the valley of Rephaim. 19 And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand; *this was sufficient encouragement.* 20 And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters, *as waters which having once made a breach, widen, till nothing can stand before them.* Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim, *that is, the plain of breaches; the name of the place was to put them in mind of God's interposition,* see Isaiah xxviii. 21. 21 And there they left their images, *which they carried about with them as their guards and protectors,* and David and his men burned them, *according to the command of God.* 22 And the Philistines came up yet again *to recover their gods; probably with some fresh forces, or other nations confederate with them,* and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 23 And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; [but] fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees; *though he had just gained such a*

* He thought to strengthen himself by these numerous alliances, and that a number of children would be his glory and security. But it was an unworthy piece of policy, especially as the king was forbidden to multiply wives, though the number is not ascertained.

† The Philistines did not stir during their civil war, hoping they would destroy one another; but when they heard that the kingdom was united, that Jerusalem was taken, and an alliance formed with Hiram, they thought it time to stir themselves, and raised all their forces to go and fight David.

victory, yet he would not go without God's order. 24 And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going, *like the noise of chariots and horsemen,* in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. 25 And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer, *to the very borders of their own country. We are told,* 1 Chron. xiv. 17., *the effect this had: his fame went through all nations, and his fear fell upon them.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may here observe, that God makes kings for the sake of mankind, and not men for the sake of kings. God made David king, and *exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.* So king David thought; and happy would it be for mankind were all kings of the same mind; would they but consider that they are the ministers of God for the good of mankind; that this is the end of their appointment, and that the pursuit of this end is their great duty, and the attaining of it their true glory. How different are these from the sentiments of many kings! They seem to think their subjects are made for them to tyrannize over and to fleece them. Kings are appointed as shepherds to feed and rule; not to be the tyrants, but the guardians, of their people. Let us pray that all kings may think and act thus; and be thankful if we find that our own does so.

2. *The counsel of God, that shall stand.* What a great many hinderances were there to David's settlement on the throne! He had some competitors, and for a long time great disaffection among the people; yet all were broken through; God determined that David should rule, and at length brought it about. *Faithful is he who hath promised,* and able to effect whatsoever he hath foretold, however unlikely it may appear to us.

3. In any settlement or advancement, so far from being secure, let us rather expect trouble and molestation. David was rich, had a numerous army, was settled in a strong fort, had wives and children about him, was never so comfortable and happy before, and seemingly secure. Then came the Philistines, who had taken no advantage of the distracted state of Israel before; but now, when least expected, they made a formidable attack. In every agreeable scene of life, we should expect alteration, and

not be confident; for this is a changing world, and he who expects least from it, is likely to be most happy in it.

4. We may infer, that God's grace is necessary to quicken our endeavours. *When the sound is perceived in the mulberry trees, then bestir thyself.* We are not to sit still, and do nothing, under pretence of dependance upon divine assistance; but attend to the motions of God's providence, and the influence of his Spirit. When God goes before, we should gird up our loins, and follow him. Wherefore let us *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure.*

CHAPTER VI.

David's design to bring up the ark is defeated; his second attempt was successful and honourable; but his joy is abated by the ill temper and perverseness of his wife.

1 AGAIN David gathered together all [the] chosen [men] of Israel, thirty thousand, *to whom he made a proposal of bringing up the ark, which had been much neglected in Saul's time**. 2 And David arose, and went with all the people that [were] with him from Baale of Judah, *or Baalah, that is, Kirjath-jearim;* to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts, that dwelleth [between] the cherubims, *or, as in* 1 Chron. xiii. 6., *whose name is called on it.* 3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that [was] in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart†. 4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which [was] at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. 5 And David and all the house of Israel played before

* David's heart was so much set upon this, that he could not rest till he found a place for it, Ps. cxxxii. The people cheerfully consented to the proposal; and a noble assembly was convened of thirty thousand chief men, besides a great multitude of common people; probably it was the feast of tabernacles, 1 Chron. xiii. 1—4.

† This was contrary to the law, which required them to carry it on their shoulders. The Philistines had done so, 1 Sam. vi. 11., and they thought they might do the same. Their zeal made them hasty and inconsiderate. The ark had been forty-six years in obscurity, perhaps longer; and probably there was not a priest living, who had seen it removed.

the LORD on all manner of [instruments made of] fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals *.

6 And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth [his hand] to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen, *by reason of their stumbling*, shook [it.] 7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for [his] error, *or rashness;* and there he died by the ark of God †. 8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah, *was deeply grieved at it, and in the midst of such a solemnity it eclipsed the glory of the day;* and he called the name of the place, Perez-uzzah, *that is, the breach of Uzzah,* to this day. 9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? *he thought himself in danger, and therefore waited for further directions.* 10 So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, *a Levite, who readily received it, knowing the ark was a safe and honourable guest, if treated with due respect; he therefore bid it welcome.* 11 And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household, *he had a great increase of cattle and corn.*

12 And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that [pertaineth] unto him, because of the ark of God ‡. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. 13 And it was [so,] that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, *and saw that there was no danger,* he sacrificed oxen and fatlings, *to atone for their past fault, and in thankfulness to God for his goodness.* 14 And David danced before the LORD with all [his] might; and David [was] girded with a linen ephod §. 15 So David

* It is probable he composed the sixty-eighth psalm to be sung on this occasion.

† Uzzah was much to blame, as he must know that none were to touch it but the priests, upon pain of death. Perhaps he advised this way of carrying it, and God awfully punished him for his presumption, by making his life a sacrifice to the honour of the Mosaic institution, and to recover a reverence for the ark. But there is no reason to conclude that he would be miserable hereafter on this account.

‡ From hence they were led to hope that God was reconciled to them. See 1 Chron. xv. 1—3., 12—15. They were sensible of their former error, and resolved not to repeat it.

§ This was an honourable garment, being part of the priest's vesture; and by

and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 16 And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart, *showed some of her father's spirit, imagining he degraded himself by putting off his ornaments, and dancing before the people.*

17 And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it, *not the old tabernacle, that was gone much to decay, except some of the curtains;* and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, before the LORD, *he made supplications for himself and the people.* 18 And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts, *prayed for their peace and prosperity; and probably on this occasion the sixty-seventh psalm was composed and sung.* 19 And he dealt among all the people, [even] among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece [of flesh,] and a flagon [of wine.] So all the people departed every one to his house, *highly pleased with the bounty and munificence of their prince.*

20 Then David returned to bless his household, *to pray with them and for them. He governed his family, as well as his kingdom, well.* And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself*! 21 And David said unto Michal, [It was] before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. 22 And I will

wearing it he expressed his willingness to appear as the meanest servant of God. And so great was his pleasure on this occasion, that he leaped or danced for joy, in the height of his affection and the warmth of his gratitude. It was a very natural expression of the greatness of his joy.

* Michal could not stay to reprove David in private, but went out to meet him, and took a public opportunity to expose him, and herself, more. It shocked her pride to see her husband, the king of Israel, demeaning himself so; putting off his royal robes, joining with the mob, and exposing himself to every girl who went to see the procession, as any vain fellow, that had lost all sense of decency and shame. This was a very unjust aspersion upon David, and he thought it proper to take down her pride, by putting her in mind that God had rejected her family, and chosen him to be king; and therefore he could never do too much to express his thankfulness to God.

yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour*. 23 Therefore, *on account of this proud, petulant, and ungodly spirit,* Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until the day of her death, *which was a great affliction to her, as she was a person of the greatest dignity, and her son would probably have been heir to the crown.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. The return of the ark from obscurity, and the reviving of God's public ordinances and worship, are occasions of great joy to all pious people. David was not easy till he had contrived and executed some scheme to bring home the ark; all Israel cheerfully concurred, and the ceremony was performed with great joy. It is a great happiness to a nation, when the restraints of public worship are taken off, and when the civil power supports and encourages religion. We should be thankful for the revival of neglected ordinances. When religion is openly and freely professed, and had in reputation, it is deservedly matter of the greatest joy.

2. The awful story of Uzzah's death, should teach us to reverence the Most High, to speak honourably of him and his worship, and show the greatest respect to whatever relates to him or his service. It is an awful illustration of that truth, *I will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh unto me, and before all the people I will be glorified.* Uzzah's intention was good, but the action was bad. In all matters of worship we should keep close to our rule, reverence God's sanctuary, and *not be rash with our mouths to utter any thing before the Lord;* but since God is holy and jealous, we should *serve him with reverence and godly fear.*

3. Let us learn from the example of Obed-edom, to give the ark a hearty reception into our houses, as the way to secure God's blessing. Let us set up the worship of God there, and invite him to dwell with us. He is a good guest, and all about us will fare the better for him. The greatest men should not think this below them.

* As if he had said, Instead of being discouraged, I will go on in it, as nothing is too mean to stoop to for God's honour; and instead of being slighted, I shall be honoured by the people; they will think better of me for my affability and pious zeal, and on this account I value the esteem of the meanest, more than all your praise, if I must gain it by neglecting God's service.

David acted as his own chaplain, and blessed his household. It is the highest honour to worship God; and another day he will say to those who sincerely do so, *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*

4. A good use is made of divine judgments, when we are brought to repentance and reformation by them. We should fear them ourselves, as David did, and rectify our errors as soon as we are sensible of them. Afflictions answer the design intended by them, if they promote humility for what is amiss, and double our care to please God and keep close to the rule of duty. *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word.*

5. There is reason to lament that this worthy, pious man, was yoked to a termagant, and ill-natured, woman. Michal, David's wife, first scorned him in her heart; and when he came home to bless his household, scolded him, and publicly called him a fool and a shameless fellow. This was highly ungrateful to David, after the affection he had showed her, and the terms he had made to bring her back. He would not accept the crown without her. It was highly imprudent to censure her husband in that public way; and highly impious to reproach him for his piety and devotion. Her charge was absolutely false, for the story shows, that being girded with a linen ephod, there was nothing indecent in his dress or behaviour. We may justly retort her words and say, How glorious was the king of Israel's wife, when she made such a foolish and ungodly speech! Poor David! after all his zeal and joy, to meet with such a reception at home! See to what lengths pride and passion will lead persons. Let all guard their hearts and not censure others for devout and pious practices. And let every wife especially *see that she reverence her husband, and not speak unadvisedly with her tongue.*

6. We may learn from the example of David, what use to make of those reproaches which men throw upon us for our religion. Let us take great care to approve ourselves to God; and if we do so, it signifies little what men say of us. They often call devotion enthusiasm and folly, and the warmth of it rage and madness. But let not this move us. David's was a noble resolution, worthy to be imitated. If this is to be vile, *I will yet be more vile.* Instead of being discouraged by such reproaches, let us set our faces like a flint. If Satan and his agents take ever so much pains to shake our religion, or shame us out of it, let us hold it so much the faster, and be the more resolute in it. To encourage us to this, remember what David adds, that this is on the whole a

sure way to gain reputation. Resolute piety will have its praise. *Those that honour God, he will honour; but those that despise him,* his servants and worship, *shall be lightly esteemed.*

CHAPTER VII.

We have here God's gracious acceptance of David's purpose to build him an house, and his promise thereupon, with David's prayer and thanksgiving.

1 AND it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, *reflecting on the meanness of God's habitation, and the splendour of his own,* and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies*; 2 That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, *whose advice he was desirous to have,* See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. 3 And Nathan *willing to encourage any scheme for the glory of God,* said to the king, Go, do all that [is] in thine heart; for the LORD [is] with thee; *he answered as a man, and not as a prophet.*

4 And *that the error might be corrected, and David not be disappointed after the work was begun,* it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, 5 Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in†? 6 Whereas I have not dwelt in [any] house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle‡. 7 In all [the places] wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, *any of the judges, or those* whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar? *and therefore thou shouldst not have attempted it without a special order from me.* 8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my ser-

* God had promised, that when the people were settled, he would choose himself a place, to put his name there, and David thought this was the time.

† This implies that he should not do it; and the reason is given in another place. David had shed much blood, and had more wars before him. But he might prepare the ceiling, settle the Levites, and get materials ready for his son to do it.

‡ The tabernacle was built with boards and pillars, and covered with fine linen and hangings. This is given as another reason; that there was no absolute need of it at present, since God had done so long without it.

vant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: 9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, *in the time of thy banishment*, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great [men] that [are] in the earth, *I have made thee a great prince, and a celebrated commander.* 10 Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness, *their idolatrous neighbours*, afflict *or distress* them any more, as beforetime, *when the judges ruled*, 11 And as since the time that I commanded judges [to be] over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house, *establish the kingdom in thy family, from one generation to another.* 12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, *one who is not yet born*, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever, *that is, for a long time.* 14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men, *with moderation and gentleness, suited to human frailty, and as men are wont to correct their children.* 15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took [it] from Saul, whom I put away before thee; *the kingdom shall continue in thy family, and not be removed, as it was from Saul's.* 16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee, *thine eyes shall see it; and* thy throne shall be established for ever*. 17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David, *with the utmost fidelity and impartiality*†. *Thus God graciously softened the refusal, by the kindest promises and assurances of his own long continuance in earthly prosperity, of God's remarkable and long-continued favour to his posterity, and that the kingdom of Christ should arise out of it.*

18 Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, *musing on his great goodness*, and he said, Who [am] I, O LORD God?

* It appears, from ver. 14., that this promise immediately refers to Solomon and his successor, but ultimately to Christ, who was the seed of David, Heb. i. 5. Christ should build a nobler temple, the church of God, and his kingdom shall be established for ever.

† Nathan was not ashamed to retract his own words, now he was taught better.

and what [is] my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 19 And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O LORD God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And [is] this the manner of man, O LORD God? *to deal so bountifully with obscure, undeserving men?* And what can David say more unto thee? *how can I utter my thankfulness?* for thou, LORD God, knowest thy servant, *seest the workings of gratitude, which I cannot express.* 21 For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, *all these promises by Samuel and Nathan, are the effects of thy good will,* to make thy servant know [them,] *that is, how much thou hast loved me, and, as it follows, thy greatness and goodness.* 22 Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for [there is] none like thee, neither [is there any] God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23 And what one nation in the earth [is] like thy people, [even] like Israel, whom God went *as it were from heaven* to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, *to let all the world know what a great and powerful Being he is;* and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, [from] the nations and their gods? *by the destruction of the Egyptians, and subduing the Canaanites before you.* 24 For thou hast confirmed to thyself, *entered into covenant with,* thy people Israel [to be] a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God. *After this thankful acknowledgment David makes his humble prayer.* 25 And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish [it] for ever, and do as thou hast said. 26 And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts, [is] the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee; *he desires this, not merely on his own account, but for God's glory.* 27 For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. 28 And now, O LORD God, thou [art] that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: *thus he acknowledges God's goodness, fidelity, and unchangeableness.* 29 Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O LORD God, hast spoken [it] and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever. *Through*

the whole David's heart seems so full of gratitude, that he cannot find words sufficient to acknowledge the goodness of God, or to express his assurance of his faithfulness.

REFLECTIONS.

1. From hence we learn, that it is our duty to inquire what we can do for God and his worship. David was no sooner at rest, than he began to contrive what he should do to show his gratitude to God. He did not inquire how to provide portions for his children, or enlarge his dominions; but what he should do for God and his ark, and to promote his glory. When God remarkably favours us, we should inquire, what shall we render to him? When we are at rest, and can sit at ease in our houses, we should do so much the more for God and his house. Let us ever maintain a generous, public spirit, and always abound in good deeds for the house of our God.

2. It is our duty to animate others to holy duties and active services, as Nathan commended David. Let us encourage the good purposes of others, forward every good design, and thus *provoke one another to love and to good works.*

3. God's promise to be with his people, is very gracious and very encouraging. What is promised concerning Solomon, is applicable to all christians. God is their father, they are his children; if they are dutiful and obedient, they shall find him kind; *if they commit iniquity, he will chasten them with the rod of men,* of old men, who are remarkably tender to their children. We see here, that afflictions are articles of God's covenant, and pledges of his parental love; he corrects with all tenderness and compassion, but does not disinherit us, does not take away his loving-kindness. Let us therefore honour our Father, and *be in subjection to him and live.*

4. This example of grateful, humble, believing, fervent prayer, is worthy of our imitation. David's heart was full; he poured it out in broken accents; could not say too much to express his humility and gratitude. Warm affections should be working in all our devotions; and if the heart is deeply impressed, it will show itself. *Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh.* Let us cultivate a fervent, devout spirit; then shall *he that is feeble be as David.*

5. Low and abasing thoughts of ourselves, are especially proper

when we are receiving peculiar favours from God. David was a man of very considerable rank, piety, valour and prudence; but when he appeared before God, he said, *Who am I?* He was sensible of his meanness amidst the highest advancement. When God is remarkably kind, we should be remarkably humble.

6. The greatness of the divine favour to us, may well fill our minds with astonishment and surprise; that God should deal so with man, a mean, unprofitable, guilty creature, who deserves nothing, and has forfeited all. *Is this the manner of man,* O Lord God! to treat rebels and enemies so favourably? *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?*

7. After the example of David, good men should be very much concerned to secure the blessing of God upon their families, and be grateful for every instance in which it is bestowed. The best entail is the blessing of God; and this should be diligently sought. Children should be instructed, and prepared for it, and taught to value it, and seek it for themselves. David's prayer is a proper one for every head of a family to put up every day. It is the language of holy desire and humble faith. God's blessing is all in all to the happiness of our families; and *if he blesses, we shall be blessed; for whom he blesses, is blessed indeed.*

CHAPTER VIII.

In which is an account of David's success in five several wars.

1 AND after this, *his resolution to build God's house,* it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah, *or, the bridle of Ammah; a place of great strength, which was a curb on the country and the towns under its jurisdiction,* out of the hand of the Philistines. 2 And *his second war was with the Moabites, and* he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive*. And [so] the Moabites became David's

* Some suppose those here mentioned were prisoners of war, and that he laid down this line of conduct, to destroy two thirds. But I rather think it refers to his destroying their fortifications and strong cities; and that he had two lines of conduct; the one was to put to death those that were obstinate, and refused the

servants, [and] brought gifts. 3 David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. *His third war was with the Syrians, Zobah lay north-east, and Euphrates was the utmost bounds promised to Canaan.* 4 And David took from him a thousand [chariots,] and seven hundred horsemen, *that is, ranks of horsemen, having ten in a rank, which make up the seven thousand mentioned,* 1 Chron. xviii. 4., and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot [horses,] but reserved of them [for] an hundred chariots, *or rather, he destroyed all their chariots but an hundred.* 5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men*. 6 Then David put garrisons in Syria, of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, [and] brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. 7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, *or, with the servants, that is, committed to their custody, being more for show than use;* and *he* brought them to Jerusalem. 8 And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

10 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, 11 Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And [Joram] brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass, *as presents to David, which were all put into the treasury:* which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued; 12 Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah. 13 And David gat [him] a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, [being] eighteen thousand [men;] *here he commanded in person, and was particularly active.*

14 And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons *to keep them in subjection,* and all they of Edom became David's servants; *thus the elder served the younger,*

offers of mercy; and the other was, to save all that submitted, or that would have submitted if their officers and commanders would have given them leave. These became tributary, Numb. xxiv. 17.

* These were the northern Syrians, who came to help the king of Zobah. This was David's fourth war.

according to the prophecy in Gen. xxv. 23. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

15 And David reigned over all Israel *without disturbance,* and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people, *he took care that justice was regularly administered.* 16 And Joab the son of Zeruiah [was] over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud [was] recorder, *or writer of chronicles*;* 17 And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, [were] the priests†; and Seraiah [was] the scribe, *or secretary of state;* 18 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [was over] both the Cherethites and the Pelethites, *old experienced soldiers, which were the life guards, and Benaiah was the captain of them;* And David's sons were chief rulers, *over the other officers, in places of the greatest authority and dignity.*

REFLECTIONS.

1 SEE how carefully David observed the law of God. He did not multiply horses and chariots, he destroyed them. This was contrary to human policy; but he depended on Jehovah for protection. This is a worthy example for all princes, and indeed for all men, to make God's will the rule of their actions; it is the wisest and safest way.

2. We may observe that *the wealth of sinners is often laid up for the just.* These kingdoms were suffered to flourish long, that their wealth might all be drained for Israel. When wicked men prosper, the world often wonders; but at length the scene opens and discovers that all is for the good of God's people, and the prosperity of the church.

3. Let us learn from the example of David, to consecrate our best to God's service, and honour him with whatsoever he hath blessed us. All the spoils and presents of David were devoted to God, were preparations for the temple, to build and enrich that. He was not intent on enriching his palace, or family, and adorning his armory, but God's house. We should imitate his great zeal and devotion; and abound in works of piety and charity. *Our merchandise and hire should be holiness to the Lord;*

* The eastern princes used to record all circumstances of note during their reign, and keep a daily journal. This was an important office, as those who filled it were let into all the secrets of state.

† Some suppose, that Zadok was set up by Saul, when Abiathar fled to David; but probably these were two commanders of the priests, the heads of the two families, or courses, into which David divided them.

consecrating our gain unto the Lord, and our substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. Thus David did, and he was not at all the poorer for it; nay, he was the richer, and left his son on the throne, the richest prince then in the world.

CHAPTER. IX.

David, in gratitude for Jonathan's kindness, makes inquiry after the house of Saul, and discovers Mephibosheth; receives him in the most friendly manner, and provides for him and his.

1 AND David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake*? 2 And [there was] of the house of Saul a servant whose name [was] Ziba, *whom David remembered, and thought he might give him some information.* And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, [Art] thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant [is he.] 3 And the king said, [Is] there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? *that is, great kindness, or kindness agreeably to the oath,* 1 Sam. xx. 14. And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, [which is] lame on [his] feet. 4 And the king said unto him, Where [is] he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he [is] in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar, *beyond Jordan.* 5 Then king David sent, *probably by Ziba,* and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. 6 Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. 7 And he answered, Behold thy servant! And David said unto him, Fear not†; for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy

* David has been charged with unkindness, because he did not do this sooner. But perhaps it would not have been prudent, till the kingdom was well established. He now made the inquiry, that he might fulfil his covenant of friendship with Jonathan, which extended to his posterity.

† Mephibosheth seems to have been in some confusion and terror; he might not have heard of the oath, and therefore was afraid lest this was some contrivance, to insnare and destroy him, lest he might make some pretensions to the kingdom; and therefore David says, Fear not.

father, *all thy paternal inheritance**, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually, *as one of my own children.* 8 And he bowed himself *with great gratitude and humility,* and said, What [is] thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as [I am?] *such an abject, insignificant, contemptible creature?*

9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house; *have settled the family estate upon him.* 10 Thou therefore *shalt be his steward,* and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in [the fruits,] that thy master's son may have food to eat, *for the support of his family, and to save him trouble:* but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants, *who were able to manage this large estate.* 11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, [said the king,] he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons†. 12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name [was] Micah‡. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba [were] servants unto Mephibosheth, *and accountable to him for all the product of the estate.* 13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet, *and therefore might seem to be a dishonour to it. This way of living gave the king a daily opportunity of expressing his gratitude and friendship for Jonathan, and of perpetuating that friendship between their posterity.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It is the duty of wise and good men to seek for opportunities of doing good, especially to the families of their friends. *A liberal soul deviseth liberal things.* David did not think it enough to serve them if they came in his way; he inquired after them. Let us inquire if there are any of Christ's poor, any we

* This was very large, and either was confiscated on Ishbosheth's rebellion, or came to David in right of his wife, according to the law of God, as Saul's sons by his wives were all dead, and he did not know of this branch of the family, who was concealed.

† David's heart so overflowed with joy because it was in his power to do honour to one of Jonathan's posterity, that he interrupted Ziba with a second declaration, *he shall eat at my table.*

‡ He had afterwards a large family, as we find in Chronicles, who kept up the remembrance of that worthy man Jonathan.

can show kindness to for his sake. Let us consider what we can do for him to whom we are so much obliged. We should especially be kind to the families of our friends, to those who have behaved worthily in their day, and have been particularly kind to us, and familiar with us. If we are able, and they are low, let us not forget or overlook them, but be so much the readier to help them. If there should be no solemn league, as in the present case, yet the law of friendship requires us to be kind to the reputation, the memory, and the descendants of those who have been our friends. This shows a truly generous spirit: *a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

2. We learn from Mephibosheth, with what temper to receive the distinguishing favours of heaven. There is a great resemblance between his case and ours. As christians, we are adopted into God's family, and invited to his table. We have reason to receive this favour with the deepest humility, and the greatest admiration of his condescension and grace. We have greater favours conferred on us than Mephibosheth had; nobler entertainments, greater honour, and a better estate, even the kingdom of heaven. We are not only restored to the inheritance our father Adam lost, but *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away:* and we had less reason to expect such a favour. Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, David's friend, who behaved well. But we are children of rebellious parents, and by our personal revolt have exposed ourselves to the divine displeasure; and as the honour which God shows us is so much superior, so much the deeper should be our humility. *Lord, what is thy servant?* But no words are sufficient to express our meanness, or the matchless grace of our God and Saviour. *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?*

CHAPTER X.

In which is an account of the disgraceful treatment of David's messengers who were sent to comfort Hanun on the death of his father, and of several victories obtained by David's forces over the Ammonites and Syrians.

1 AND it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. 2 Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me; *being an enemy of Saul's, he probably had protected David, and sent him supplies, during his banishment.* And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for *the death of* his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. 3 And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David [rather] sent his servants unto thee, to search the city and to spy it out, *where the city is weakest,* and to overthrow it? 4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, [even] to their buttocks, and sent them away*. 5 When they told [it] unto David, he sent to meet them *with clothes and other necessaries,* because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and [then] return†.

6 And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, *were become odious to him,* the children of Ammon

* This was a very great indignity, for the beard was then reckoned an ornament. It was a common punishment among the eastern nations, on cowards or adulterers, to cut off their beards. But he cut off their garments also; and as they wore no breeches or drawers, it exposed them to shame. This was probably done in contempt of their religion and laws. See Lev. xix. 27., Isaiah xx. 4. xlvii. 2, 3. It was also an offence against the laws of gratitude and hospitality, and contrary to the laws of nature and nations.

† There were but a few houses or cottages where Jericho formerly stood, the city not being rebuilt. This was a proper place to hide their shame; and they were not to return in their present situation, lest persons of their rank and quality should be reproached and ridiculed, and their office be brought into contempt. David resented the affront; but considering it as the effect of youthful vanity and rashness, he made no preparation for attacking them, but waited to see what they would do, and whether they would take any steps towards expiating the injury.

sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thousand men, *who all readily joined to revenge the injuries David had done them, and prevent his increasing greatness.* 7 And when David heard of [it,] *he did not wait for their attack, but* he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men *to attack them.* 8 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate *of Medeba, a city in the tribe of Reuben:* and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ish-tob, and Maacah, [were] by themselves in the field. 9 When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice [men] of Israel, and put [them] in array against the Syrians, *who were the strongest and most valiant:* 10 And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put [them] in array against the children of Ammon. 11 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee, *each were to keep detachments in readiness to help the weaker.* 12 Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good; *let us behave ourselves valiantly, be resolute for the preservation of our country, and leave the event to God.* 13 And Joab drew nigh, and the people that [were] with him, unto the battle against the Syrians; *he thought it most prudent to attack the mercenary troops first, as they were most likely to give way:* and they fled before him. 14 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians, *upon whom they placed their chief dependence,* were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city *for safety.* So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem; *finding the season too far advanced to pursue the victory, he returned home.*

15 And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together; *fearing that David would fall upon them for assisting his enemies, they were resolved to be beforehand with him.* 16 And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that [were] beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer [went] before them. 17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, *and went to command in person,* and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in

array against David, and fought with him. 18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew [the men of] seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach* the captain of their host, who died there. 19 And when all the kings [that were] servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them, *became subject to David, and paid tribute.* So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We are taught, from the example of David, to be grateful for kindnesses received. Nahash was a monster of cruelty, and used the Israelites very ill; but as he was kind to David, though his motive for doing so was only to vex Saul, he was willing to show his gratitude. No vileness in the author of a benefaction, can cancel the gratitude due for it. When we receive a kindness, we are not to inquire into the principle from whence it flows, or the grounds of it. If the Pharisees gave alms through pride, the receiver was bound to be thankful. Whatever men's hearts are, we are to look to their hands; and repay, not what they meant, but what they did; return the kindness according to our ability. And if our benefactors are dead, we should do it to their children.

2. We may observe, that what is well meant may be ill interpreted, and receive a base return; so it was here. It is hard for wicked, selfish men, to think well of others. They judge of others by themselves, and are ready to suspect some selfish design. This suspicious temper argues a very bad mind. If we are so treated, it is no great wonder, for it was so of old. The more we are convinced of the absurdity and iniquity of such practices, the more careful we should be not to treat others so. *The soul of the wicked desireth evil, his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.*

3. We may reflect, what an unhappy thing it is for a young prince to have evil counsellors about him. Hanun had but little experience, and was not very able to judge for himself; therefore

* This word also signifies *chariot* and *charioteer*, which occasions some ambiguity. Probably he slew about an equal number of each, forty thousand horse and foot; and thus extended his conquests to the great river, according to the promise and prophecy to Abraham.

he was disposed to hearken to the advice of others. It is very unhappy for a nation when this is the case. Who can tell what quarrels and sorrows such may bring upon themselves, and the whole kingdom, and all its allies. Let us earnestly pray, that God may direct in the choice of those who counsel young princes; that they may be wise and upright; know and pursue, not what will gratify their own ambition, selfishness, and revenge, but what will tend to the credit of the prince, and the welfare of the nation.

4. Great dangers sometimes inspire bad men with true sentiments of courage and piety. Joab, excepting some actions, behaved like a prudent, valiant general, and shone as a great man. Here he talks like a good man; even David himself could scarce have talked better. He argues from the most just and influential topics; not from private glory or advantage, but from the honour of God, the safety and credit of Israel; and under a deep sense of an over-ruling providence, piously leaves the success with God. Oh that our commanders would imitate his example! Zeal for God and religion, and the cause of liberty and our country, are the best arguments to inspire men with ardour and courage.

5. We learn from these Syrians, to avoid those snares and dangers by which we have been already injured. When the Israelites had smitten the Syrians, they forsook their old allies, and made peace. When we have smarted for our folly in some instances, by our indulgences and confederacies, let us take warning, and not engage in them any more. Experience is never good till it is bought; many buy it very dear, and suffer much before they have learned it; but it is better late than never. Let sinners, the enemies of God, act thus. If they have opposed him, and strove with their Maker, as all sinners do, let their afflictions, their fears, their terrors of conscience, and disappointment in creature comforts, make them solicitous to retreat in time, to make peace with him, and become his servants; otherwise their iniquity will be their utter and everlasting ruin.

CHAPTER XI.

In the last chapter we left David in the midst of glory and success; but here a very melancholy story opens upon us, the sin of David in the affair of Bath-sheba and Uriah.

1 AND it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth [to battle,] *that is, in the spring,* that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah, *their royal city.* But David tarried still at Jerusalem, *he began to indulge himself in ease and pleasure.* 2 And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, *where he had laid down to sleep, as is usual in hot countries at that time of day,* and *he* walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself *in her chamber;* and the woman [was] very beautiful to look upon. 3 And David sent and inquired after the woman. And [one] said, [Is] not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? *He was one of David's guards, and was originally an Hittite, but now a proselyte to the Jewish religion.* 4 And David sent messengers, *perhaps on pretence of other business,* and *they* took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house *.

4 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I [am] with child †. 6 And David sent to Joab, [saying,] Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. *He was a proper person to be sent, being a considerable officer, and, the Jews say, Joab's armour-bearer.* 7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded [of him] how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered, *whether there was any probability of their taking the city.* 8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet, *refresh thyself after the fatigues of the journey.* And Uriah departed out of

* It is difficult to say how far she was to blame; but he was certainly the greatest criminal who seduced her, if I had said forced her, the original word would bear me out, as it generally signifies an incapacity of resistance.

† She was in danger of death by the law of God, as an adulteress, and therefore consulted with David how they might contrive a way to hide their shame, and she to avoid punishment.

the king's house, and there followed him a mess [of meat] from the king, *in token of extraordinary favour and kindness, that he might go home and feast with his wife.* 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house, *in a guard chamber,* with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house. 10 And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from [thy] journey? why [then] didst thou not go down unto thine house? *He gave him a kind rebuke for not taking more care of himself, intimating that he did not expect him to keep watch.* 11 And Uriah *made a brave, and truly soldier-like reply, and* said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? [as] thou livest, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing *. 12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to-morrow I will let thee depart, *under pretence that he could not get his despatches ready, but really hoping, that being so long near so amiable a woman, would engage him to visit her.* So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow. 13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk, *hoping that he would then have gone home* †, and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but *his resolution was fixed, and he* went not down to his house.

14 And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent [it] by the hand of Uriah. 15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die ‡. 16 And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men [were,] *he set him to take a part of the city which he*

* Uriah could not think of indulging himself, while his fellow-soldiers were exposed to so many hardships. His solemn manner of pronouncing this, one would think should have touched David to the heart for his having abused so brave a man, and indulged himself in unlawful pleasures, while this brave soldier was so willing to endure hardships, and deny himself innocent gratifications.

† There is no reason to believe that he suspected what had passed between David and his wife; but the hand of Providence was counter-plotting David's designs, in order to bring his sin to light.

‡ David formed this horrid contrivance in order to have him slain, and thus, if possible, prevent the infamy and punishment of his wife, and hide his own sin and shame. Uriah himself took this despatch to Joab; and if he had suspected the matter, he would have opened the letter.

knew would be valiantly defended. 17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell [some] of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. *The besieged made a sally, slew some of the soldiers, and the king's guard, and this brave man among the rest* *.

18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war; *how he had managed, and what ill success they had in the last attack:* 19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, 20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died at Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then, *that the king may know why we undertook such a desperate attack,* say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

22 So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for. 23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate. 24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and [some] of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also †. 25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease *nor dishearten* thee: for *it is only the fate of war,* the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

26 And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband, *probably seven days, as was usual on such occasions* ‡. 27 And when the mourning was past, David sent, and fetched her to his house, and she became

* Joab is generally thought to be much to blame in executing the king's orders; but he might be innocent. He perhaps imagined that Uriah had been guilty of some notorious crime, for which David, consulting Uriah's honour as an officer, would not punish him openly, but chose that he should die serving his country, in the bed of honour.

† The messenger put it in a different light; that the Ammonites made a sally, and at first were too hard for the Israelites; but they rallied and pursued them to the city, and in the height of the pursuit, came too near the walls; from whence the archers destroyed some of the guards, and Uriah among the rest.

‡ She has been charged with hypocrisy for mourning; but I see no reason for this. It is probable she thought he fell by the common fate of war; and if he made her as good a husband, as he did a soldier, he deserved her highest esteem.

his wife, and bare him a son*. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD; *his adultery, the murder of Uriah, and marrying Bath-sheba, were very displeasing to God.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THERE is great reason to lament that a good man should be guilty of such horrid crimes. Is this David? *the man after God's own heart?* Is this he, whose heart smote him when he only cut off the skirt of Saul's garment? Is this he, who had so many wives? who was a king, and should have set a better example? What! David seduce a woman of good reputation, eminent for her wisdom and piety, (as the latter end of *Proverbs* plainly shows), the wife of one of his brave officers, when he was doing his duty, and contrive his murder so deliberately, and the destruction of others with him? to the joy of the Ammonites, and the grief of all pious Israelites who heard of it. A melancholy story indeed is this. *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon, lest the uncircumcised triumph.* The scriptures faithfully relate this shameful miscarriage of one of its greatest heroes; which is at once an evidence of their sincerity, and an awful warning to all, even to the best of men. *It was written for our learning, that he who thinketh he standeth, may take heed lest he fall.* Therefore,

2. We should learn hence, to avoid all occasions of sin, and quench the first sparks of temptation. Had David been with his army, as he undoubtedly should, he would have escaped this blot. Had he been at his harp, or his psalms, at almost any thing but being idle, he had not fallen. Had he checked the temptation at first, turned away his eyes from the tempting object, and given himself to prayer, he had overcome the temptation. May we avoid every thing which may be an occasion of sin, and an incentive to fleshly lusts; especially idleness, and a love of sloth. Let us mind the duties of our station; *make a covenant with our eyes;* and if we would be safe, we must *watch* as well as *pray, that we enter not into temptation.*

3. See the mischievous consequences of sin; how one leads to another; and what vast evil one act of vice is often big with;

* It was indecent for him to marry her so soon; but he thought it necessary, to hide their shame, and skreen her from a criminal process. Thus far things went on upon the whole as David desired, but the chapter concludes with an awful sentence.

how much one sin needs another to cloak and conceal it. Adultery must be covered with treachery, making Uriah drunk and then murdering him. *The way of sin is down hill;* a man knows not where he will stop. The beginnings of sin ought to be dreaded; and the appearances of it avoided; for who can tell where it will end? Let us daily pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

4. We learn, that God observes the sins of his own people with great displeasure. He must see it and be displeased with it in every one: but the sins of his peculiar people are most of all displeasing, because there is so much of ingratitude and treachery in them. If any therefore, are so presumptuous and wicked as to encourage themselves in sin by this example, or to palliate their crimes, by pleading what David did, let them know that the displeasure of almighty God will follow them. And the sacred historian, in the account of the unparalleled evils which came on David's family, yea, he himself, in his penitential Psalm (Psalm li.) composed on this occasion, has shown us what an evil thing sin is, and what bitterness it will be in the end. *Stand in awe*, therefore, *and sin not.*

CHAPTER XII.

We have in this chapter David's repentance for his great sin; Nathan's parable; the application of it to David, and the judgment threatened to his family; the child's death; the birth of Solomon; and the taking of Rabbah.

1 AND the LORD sent Nathan unto David*. And he came and said unto him *in a parable*†, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 2 The rich [man] had exceeding many flocks and herds: 3 But the poor [man] had no-

* This was after the child was born, when the thing was known, and came to be publicly talked of. It is probable that David repented before this; but Nathan was sent to bring him to a public acknowledgment, that he might give glory to God, and be a warning and admonition to others.

† This was a prudent and respectful way of reproving, and after the manner of the eastern nations, by which David was brought to condemn himself. As this was the great design, it was not necessary that there should be an exact resemblance in every particular. Some things were only ornamental. Nathan had been used to come on these occasions, to complain of irregularities in the kingdom, and see that the king did justice to the injured.

thing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter, *exceedingly dear and beloved.* 4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him*. 5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, [As] the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this [thing] shall surely die, *or is worthy to die, because there was so much cruelty in it, being done out of wantonness and tyranny, and not from any necessity.* 6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, *according to the law*, Exodus xxii. 1., because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. 7 And Nathan said to David, Thou [art] the man; *that guilty person thou hast accused and condemned*†. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; 8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if [that had been] too little, I would moreover have given thee such and such things. 9 Wherefore *then* hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, *contrived the murder of that brave man by the sword of the enemy;* and hast taken his wife [to be] thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon; *he repeats this, intimating that he had murdered him that he might take his wife, which was contrary to the law against multiplying wives.* 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife‡. 11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy

* He might have added, *and he slew the poor man that he might not tell;* but this would have brought the case too close, and David would have seen it too soon.

† The prophet here speaks, not as a petitioner for the poor man, but as an ambassador from the God of heaven. David's sin was aggravated by all his obligations to God, in raising him to such dignity from low circumstances; he had given him Saul's estate and family to dispose of as he pleased, and dominion over all the twelve tribes; and if that was not enough, he might only have asked, and God would have given him such things as he wanted, and could reasonably desire.

‡ This sentence was fulfilled in the death of Absalom, Amnon, and Adonijah, who all fell by the sword, and so did many of his remote descendants, especially when the whole royal house, except one, was slain by Athaliah, and Zedekiah's son was slain before his eyes.

wives before thine eyes, and give [them] unto thy neighbour, *to one who is most near to thee**, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For thou didst [it] secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. 13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD†. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die, *neither eternally, nor by any sudden stroke or judgment, according to thy own sentence,* ver. 5‡. 14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, *and reproach religion, as if it countenanced such practices,* the child also [that is] born unto thee, shall surely die. *By this God vindicated his own justice, maintained the truth and purity of his religion, and let the world see how much he was displeased with David's crime.*

15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. 16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, *to his closet, or some retired place,* and lay all night upon the earth. 17 And the elders of his house, *the principal officers about his court,* arose, [and went] to him, to raise him up from the earth, *and entreated him not to give way to excessive grief, but take care of his health:* but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them *as usual, but fasted, wept, and prayed, in hopes that the threatening was only conditional*§. 18 And it came to pass on the seventh day *after it fell ill,* that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? 19 But when David saw that his servants

* This was his own son Absalom, who spread his tent probably on the very house-top from whence David saw Bath-sheba, and debauched his father's wives in the sight of all Israel. *See* chap. xvi. 22.

† Perhaps David did not say much more than this upon the occasion; his heart was so full that he cried out in a truly penitent manner, with blushing and tears, *I have sinned against the Lord.* And God seeing his repentance was sincere, directed Nathan to assure him of pardon thereupon.

‡ Long preceding repentance might qualify him for this display of mercy. The thirty-second, and other penitential psalms, seem to prove this. But as the sin was public, so the repentance must be; and he composed the fifty-first psalm to be sung publicly in the tabernacle, while he prostrated himself before the throne of mercy.

§ Perhaps he was the more earnest on this occasion, partly because he considered the child's death as a punishment for his sin, and partly out of his great love to Bath-sheba. Besides, we are sometimes ready to value things according to the distress and trouble which they cost us.

whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed [himself,] and changed his apparel; *with great resignation and resolution he put off his mourning habit*, and came into the house of the LORD, *in the tent which was provided for the ark*, and worshipped, *returned thanks for the pardon, expressed his submission to the divine will, and entreated God to moderate and sanctify the affliction;* then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing [is] this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, [while it was] alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell [whether] God will be gracious to me, that the child may live*? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? *rather let me prepare to follow him, for* I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

24 And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, *who was greatly distressed for her sin, and the loss of her child*, and *he* went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon, *that is, peaceable, because he was to enjoy a peaceable reign*, 1 Chron. xxii. 9., and the LORD loved him. 25 And, *as a token of reconciliation to father and mother, and love to the child*, he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, *that is, beloved of the Lord*, because of the LORD.

26 And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city; *made such a breach, that that part of the city wherein the royal palace stood, which was compassed with waters, might easily be taken*†. 27 And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters, *got possession of the lower parts of it, and the soldiers have retired to the upper and stronger parts.* 28 Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name. *Joab loved his prince and endeavoured to raise*

* This was a truly heroic and religious reason; while the child was alive there was some hope that God would reverse the sentence, there was room for prayer.

† Some think this was done before David's repentance, and the birth of Solomon; but I rather think the siege held out so long, as the city, which the word signifies, was a large and strong place, and a royal city, where the palace was.

*his glory, and he knew the city must soon surrender if the waters were cut off**. And David, *according to Joab's advice,* gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it *by storm.* 30 And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight, *that is, the value,* whereof [was] a talent of gold with the precious stones†: and it was [set] on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance. 31 And he brought forth the people that [were] therein, and put [them] under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon‡. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

REFLECTIONS.

1. This instance of God's forgiving goodness, is a great encouragement to true penitents. David's was a complicated and aggravated iniquity. But when the heart is truly humble and penitent, God forgives. This may give encouragement to the greatest sinners to hope in the divine mercy, if their hearts are contrite, if they abhor and have forsaken their sins. *Let the wicked,* therefore, *forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him.*

2. The sins of God's people are peculiarly shameful in themselves, and displeasing to God, as they give his enemies occasion to blaspheme. We may suppose that the profane Israelites now triumphed. Is this your professor? This the sweet psalmist of Israel? Let those who profess religion, and a relation to God, walk circumspectly, and not give occasion to those who seek for it. Those especially, who make any particular profession, should be peculiarly cautious, and give no occasion to the enemies of our worship to speak reproachfully. If after iniquity, God should

* Polybius tells us that Antiochus did so by it some hundred years after this.

† This crown was worth several thousand pounds, some say, five thousand at least.

‡ It has been the opinion of some persons, that this expression relates to the severity with which David treated them, and they vindicate his doing so, from various considerations. But it may signify only putting them under such labours, and making slaves of them to do hard and servile work. So we speak of laying men under tribute. It is a common mode of speech in several languages.

The French Bible printed at Geneva, 1805, is thus translated into English: "He brought forth the inhabitants, and applied some to the labour of saws, of harrows of iron and axes of iron, and others to the labour of bricks."—Vide Gent. Mag. for June 1812, p. 537.

forgive, yet he may see it necessary to animadvert upon it in this world; he may bring upon us such heavy calamities, as may imbitter our whole lives. This was the case with David. Let professors of religion, therefore, be very careful so to behave, that they may at once secure the favour and friendship of almighty God, and adorn the doctrine of God, by a holy life and conversation.

3. The arguments by which David composed his own mind after the death of his child, are very proper for us when mourning the death of desirable children. It was a very solid consideration, that all his grief could not recover his child. It is a very wise thought, though not a very comfortable one, that it is all in vain to weep and sorrow; *there is no help in us.* This shows the necessity of endeavouring to compose our minds, and not to give a loose to our passions. He further reflected, that he should quickly go after it. Considering himself as a mortal creature, he saw the folly of excessive grief. When friends die, we should think of our own death; how quickly we shall go after them: therefore we have something else to do than spend our time in fruitless sorrow. The words intimate further, that, looking beyond the grave, he saw something to assuage his grief, some views of future happiness. The prospect of meeting our fellow-creatures again, and being for ever with them, is a source of comfort and joy when they are taken away. Let us therefore *be patient in tribulation,* and *be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live.*

CHAPTER XIII.

Nathan had told David, that God would raise up evil in his house, and here the threatening began to be fulfilled. Amnon defileth his sister, and is murdered by Absalom's order.

1 AND it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name [was] Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. *Amnon was David's eldest son, and heir to the crown.* 2 And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar, *the violence of his passion injured his health;* for she [was] a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her; *the terror of indulging it increased his disorder.*

3 But Amnon had a friend, *a first cousin, who was very intimate with him,* whose name [was] Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab [was] a very subtil man; *very artful in finding out means to accomplish his ends, and he pumped out the fatal secret.* 4 And he said unto him, Why [art] thou, [being] the king's son, lean from day to day, *pale, wan, and dejected, seeing thou art the king's son, and mayest command thy desires, and not be under the restraint of ordinary men:* wilt thou not tell me, *and open thy whole heart to thy friend?* And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. 5 And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see [it,] and eat [it] at her hand*. 6 So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand; *she is so dear unto me, that I shall eat any thing the better for being her dressing.* 7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon's house, and dress him meat. 8 So Tamar, *like an obedient daughter, a kind sister, and a good housewife,* went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded [it], and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes. 9 And she took a pan, and poured [them] out before him; but he refused to eat, *pretending that he had no appetite, was grown worse, and could not bear company, he would therefore retire into an inner chamber, and there try to eat.* And Amnon said, Have out all men from me. And they went out every man from him. 10 And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought [them] into the chamber to Amnon her brother; *her own innocence and near relationship to Amnon made her think herself secure.* 11 And when she had brought [them] unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come, lie with me, my sister; *he threw off the mask, and made an infamous attempt on her virtue.* 12 And she *reasoned with him, and*

* This wicked courtier, instead of reproving him and turning his thoughts some other way, furnished him with an expedient to gratify his passion. He must feign himself sick; and when his father came to see him, complain of his stomach, that he wanted something nice, which must be prepared in his presence, by a person for whom he had an high esteem. This was a plausible pretence for seeing her at his own house.

answered him *in the most pertinent manner*, Nay, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing ought to be done in Israel; do not thou this folly. 13 And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee*. 14 Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her, *determined to gratify his brutal passion, to the insuperable injury of his amiable and virtuous sister.*

15 Then Amnon, *in consequence of her reproaches, and his own conscience recoiling*, hated her exceedingly, *when he should have hated himself;* so that the hatred wherewith he hated her [was] greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon, *instead of using any means to sooth her grief*, said unto her, Arise, be gone. 16 And she said unto him, [There is] no cause: this evil in sending me away [is] greater than the other that thou didst unto me†. But he would not hearken unto her. 17 Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this [woman] out from me, and bolt the door after her; *this was barbarous and cruel usage, as if she had been an impudent intruder.* 18 And [she had] a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters [that were] virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.

19 And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that [was] on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying, *with all the expressions of the greatest grief and deepest distress.* 20 And Absalom her brother, *to whose house she went*, said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he [is] thy brother; regard not this thing‡. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house, *in a forlorn and mournful condition.*

* Tamar here pleaded, that she was a near relation; that she would not submit without violence; that such a thing ought not to be done in Israel, a nation devoted to God; that it would be an insuperable dishonour to her; that she could neither drive away her shame, nor hide it; that he would lose his reputation, and perhaps his crown, and be considered as a man void of all religion, honour, and humanity. But finding all this would not do, she intimated, that he was his father's darling, and he would deny him nothing, and would therefore give her to him for his wife. She urged any thing to divert him from his purpose, and deliver herself from the present danger; but all was in vain.

† It was not a greater sin, but a greater mischief, because it would publish her shame, and be a public scandal on the whole family. The first injury might be concealed and repented of; the second was deliberate, and would bring reproach on himself, on her, and on the religion and people of God.

‡ Absalom covered his suspicions in the most decent and prudent phrase, and

21 But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth, *and no wonder; but he did not punish him, as he ought to have done.* 22 And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad *about this matter; he did not so much as let him know that he was offended, but cherished his hatred, and meditated revenge:* for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar. 23 And it came to pass after two full years, *harbouring all the while his wicked project and waiting a fair opportunity,* that Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-hazor, which [is] beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons *to the sheep-shearing and festival.* 24 And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheep-shearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant; *he invited the king and his family to go, to avoid suspicion.* 25 And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him; *thanked him for his invitation, and wished them much joy in their feast.* 26 Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee*? 27 But Absalom, *that there might be no ground of suspicion,* pressed him, *so* that he let Amnon and all *his brothers* the king's sons go with him. 28 Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant†. 29 And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled, *fearing he would destroy the whole royal family.*

30 And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left. *One of the attendants seeing Amnon slain, concluded all the rest would share the same*

to spare her blushes he prevented her answering, and advised her to be composed, because the offender was her brother. He knew Amnon's character to be a bad one, or he never would have suspected that he could be guilty of such a thing.

* Amnon being the eldest son, he would shew him respect, and it would be an honour to his company; but the king waved this also, probably from the same principle, that Absalom might not run to too great an expense at the shearing.

† Absalom knew his brother was a debauchee; he thought he would be drunk, and at such a time less suspicious, and less fit to make resistance. He likewise thought his authority would be sufficient to vindicate his servants, and had probably some view to the crown, as well as revenge.

fate, and came and told David so. 31 Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent. 32 And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose [that] they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. 33 Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead*. 34 But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hill side behind him; *they came a round-about way to prevent their being perceived, as they still thought themselves in danger.* 35 And Jonadab, *who went out to see, came in with the news, and* said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is. 36 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore.

37 But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur, *his mother's father*, chap. iii. 3., and [David] mourned for his son every day, *for Amnon who was so treacherously slain.* 38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 And [the soul of] king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead; *at length his affection for Absalom got the better of his fruitless grief for Amnon; and, unwilling to want the comfort of both his sons, he was solicitous to see Absalom again, and be reconciled to him, if he could tell how to do it without impeachment of his honour and justice.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. What a dangerous enemy is a subtil and wicked friend! Such was Jonadab to Amnon: he flattered and encouraged him in his wickedness, against law and conscience, and all the good principles by which the mind can be influenced. It is bad for any, especially for young men, when their friends and com-

* Jonadab concluded this must be the case, from having heard Absalom express his purpose of revenge, and never heard of any quarrel with the rest of the family. He speaks of the horrid villany which he himself had contrived, with unparalleled impudence, as what gave him no concern.

panions, instead of reproving and admonishing them, and warning them of the danger of fleshly lusts, are their counsellors to do wickedly, and forward them in evil ways. Young persons should be careful in the choice of companions, lest *they learn their way*, follow their counsel, *and get a snare to their souls. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, cast in thy lot among us. My son, walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path: for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.*

2. Following business and good husbandry, is no way unbecoming the greatest personages. Absalom, though the king's son, had his farm, and his sheep-shearing. His sister was as eminent for her good housewifery as for her beauty, and did not think domestic employments were beneath her: she was not afraid of spoiling the beauty of her face, or the whiteness of her hands, by kneading and baking. Business is not beneath the greatest gentleman; domestic employments are not below the finest lady, and it is unhappy for many families in this day that pride and idleness so much prevail; that sons and daughters learn dressing, gaming, and dancing, and every thing but wisdom, diligence and good housewifery. Let parents and young people think of the wise consideration which David suggests in *v.* 25., and set out moderately in the world. Especially let them not be fond of making entertainments, and inviting those who must necessarily put them to great expense.

3. See the mischievous effects of unbridled passions; what desperate lengths they carry men to, and what dreadful consequences they involve men in. Amnon could never have behaved thus, if he had not been an abandoned fellow. To what infamous lengths did his brutal passion lead him! What dreadful agonies of conscience and horror must he have felt, when he could not bear the sight of his injured sister. But he knew all the guilt lay upon himself. He had brought ruin on his amiable sister, distress upon his pious father, and scandal on all Israel. May we learn to resist temptation; avoid cherishing any thought, or harbouring any desire that is criminal; for whether gratified or not, they will be our torment. Let young people especially *flee youthful lusts, be sober-minded, and keep themselves pure*, their minds unspotted, and all their ideas chaste: and *watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.*

4. We see here how abominable malice and revenge are. What infamous characters were both David's sons; Absalom hated

Amnon, and concealed it for two years, without showing any signs of it. He cloaked his wicked design with the pretence of civility and kindness. See into what a devil indulged malice and ill-nature can turn a man. What a torment must he have been to himself for those two years. Let us guard against a revengeful spirit. However we may be injured, we are forbid to revenge ourselves. Guard against rancour and hatred; for *he that hateth his brother, is a murderer;* and we know that *no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

CHAPTER XIV.

In the former chapter Absalom was outlawed; in this we have the method Joab took to have him restored; by artifice he gains judgment in his favour, and has orders to bring him home; he returns to court, and his person is described.

1 NOW Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart [was] towards Absalom; *that the king longed to see him, but wanted a fair pretence.* 2 And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead*: 3 And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth. 4 And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king. 5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I [am] indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead. 6 And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and [there was] none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him; *she pretended she had lost her husband and one son, and was in great danger of losing the other.* 7 And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may

* Joab contrived this matter in order to ingratiate himself with David, and with Absalom, who was heir to the crown. He chose a woman, as they more easily express their passions, and gain pity to their misfortunes; he brought her from a distance, that the king might not immediately send to inquire into the case. She appeared in the habit of a mourner.

kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also, *and then the inheritance will be theirs:* and so they shall quench my coal which is left, *my only remaining comfort, which is like a single coal in a heap of ashes, and my only hope of enkindling others,* and shall not leave to my husband [neither] name nor remainder upon the earth. 8 And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee, *that thy son may be secured.* 9 And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity [be] on me, and on my father's house; *if I have given wrong information, I and my family will bear the guilt and punishment,* and the king and his throne [be] guiltless. 10 And the king said, Whosoever saith [aught] unto thee, *or attempts to seize thy son,* bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more. 11 Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, *thy promise made in God's presence,* that thou wouldst not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, [As] the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth. *Thus she artfully drew him to confirm it by an oath, that she might be entirely satisfied.* 12 Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak [one] word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on. 13 And the woman *proceeded to open the meaning of the parable, and* said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing *as I have been speaking of* against the people of God; *the whole commonwealth of Israel, who are affected and grieved at Absalom's exile?* for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished, *who is a greater loss to Israel than my son can be to me. Nothing could excuse this boldness but her knowledge of David's affection for Absalom.* 14 For we must needs die, *all must die, Amnon is irrecoverably gone, David must die, and the kingdom are in distress for a successor who is now banished from us,* and *we* [are] as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect [any] person; yet doth he devise means, *or, because God hath not taken away his life, he hath also devised means* that his banished be not expelled from him; *he hath not immediately destroyed Absalom, he hath left room for mercy, hath provided cities of refuge, and thus shown his patience and clemency.* 15 Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, [it is] because the people have made me afraid, *by their uneasiness and discontent:* and thy handmaid said, I will now speak

unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid. 16 For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man [that would] destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God; *if he would save her son for her sake, much more Absalom for the people's sake.* 17 Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so [is] my lord the king to discern good and bad, *to distinguish between a reasonable and an unreasonable request:* therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee, *will direct thee to judge aright, and incline thee to show mercy.* 18 Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak. 19 And the king, *thinking she durst not venture on this without being set on by some greater person,* said, [Is not] the hand of Joab with thee in all this? *He thought Joab was most likely, as he was Absalom's friend.* And the woman answered and said, [As] thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from aught that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid: 20 To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord [is] wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all [things] that [are] in the earth; *finding it in vain to dissemble, she freely acknowledges it, and pays a fine compliment to David, who could so easily see through the designs of men.*

21 And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again. 22 And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant*. 23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jesusalem. 24 And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face. *David would not permit him to come to court, but resolved still to mortify and punish him, to show the people his detestation of the horrid crime he had committed.*

25 But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as

* Joab acknowledges it as the greatest obligation the king could confer upon him, and a mark of his special favour; though at the same time he knew it was the greatest kindness that could be done to the king. It was a fine piece of flattery and address from this artful courtier.

Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 26 And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled [it:] because [the hair] was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight*. 27 And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter†, whose name [was] Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

28 So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face. 29 Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king, but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come‡. 30 Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. 31 Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto [his] house, *to expostulate with him*, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire? 32 And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? [it had been] good for me [to have been] there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be [any] iniquity in me, let him kill me§. 33 So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom, *and was reconciled to him.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. The remembrance of God's forbearance and long-suffering towards sinners, will have an happy influence to promote religion, especially those branches of it, clemency and mercy. God does not execute his sentence against them immediately;

* The weight of his hair, as here mentioned, was prodigious, upwards of three pounds. Though I think it may rather refer to its value, as the word signifies both the weight of goods, and the value of money.

† These probably died young, for we read afterwards that he had none.

‡ Absalom had ambitious designs in his head, which could not be effected whilst he was kept from court. But Joab, like an old politician, would not go to him, fearing the king would be angry if he should press him, or lest Absalom's popularity should eclipse him, and lessen his share in the king's favour.

§ He expresses no sense of any injury done to Joab, and is angry that he did not come when he desired him. He then sends him with an impudent message to the king, to let him know that he had rather die than not see him. It was presumption on his father's fondness for him that made him talk in this high strain.

he has made provisions to bring home his banished seed, to restore sinners; and has appointed sacrifices under the law, and the sufferings of Christ under the gospel, for this kind purpose. This is a proper expedient and an honourable way of doing it. Let sinners therefore remember, that it is their own fault if they are not restored. This should lead us to be merciful and compassionate, *even as our Father in heaven is merciful. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

2. We see that a handsome person sometimes covers a deformed soul, ver. 25. *But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty.* Nothing is said of his wisdom and piety; he was only the fine gentleman. His outside beauty concealed a proud, base, malignant soul. This would be a poor commendation of a woman, much less so of a man. Let us not be proud of external accomplishments, but seek the beauties of the mind, the ornaments of wisdom, virtue, meekness, and humility. *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but every one who feareth the Lord shall be praised.*

3. See how wise and good men may be deceived and imposed upon by their children, especially when they are over fond of them. David forgave Absalom's horrid crime, admitted him to favour, and cherished a viper in his own bosom. Affection blinds the eyes. Parents should judge wisely and cautiously, even of their own children, and treat them according to their deserts; else they will prove a grief of heart to them, as this proud wretch did to David, as we shall see afterwards; and, if they prove rebellious and disobedient, the more fond they are of them, the greater will be their torment and vexation.

CHAPTER XV.

In which is an account of Absalom's rebellion; of David's flight from Jerusalem, and settling some schemes to defeat the insurrection.

1 AND it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him*. 2 And Absalom rose up early, *to shew self-denial, diligence, and concern for the public good,* and stood beside the way of the gate: and

* Some suppose he took advantage of David's sickness to do this, and by a grand equipage to attract the eyes and minds of the people to him as David's successor.

it was [so] that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city [art] thou? And he said, thy servant [is] of one of the tribes of Israel? And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters [are] good and right*, but [there is] no man [deputed] of the king to hear thee; *the king is old and infirm, his counsellors are bad, and his ministers wicked. This was a false and vile insinuation.* 4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice. *Absalom, to humble his pride, had no post; but he pretended to have a public spirit, that he was willing to serve every one, and that justice was not done.* 5 And it was [so,] that when any man came nigh [to him] to do him obeisance, *and honour him as the king's son, he would not permit him to bow himself, but showed the greatest affability and affection, and* he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. 6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; *his beautiful person, being heir-apparent, and all these artful insinuations, gained their affections.*

7 And it came to pass after forty years *from David's anointing, and four years after his reconciliation with his father, (as Josephus and the ancient versions tell us),* that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron; *he pretended piety, the more easily to gain his father's consent.* 8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD. *He adopted the patriarchal style, and intimated, that though he was tempted by his grandfather and his court to serve the gods of Geshur, yet he continued steady to Jehovah.* 9 And the *good* king, *delighted at this,* said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron†. 10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron; *this will animate them to come to my standard.* 11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, [that

* Absalom upon a very slight hearing gave judgment in his favour, and if the cause was for him, it would confirm his opinion of Absalom's wisdom; but if against him, he would think it would have been better if Absalom had been the judge.

† Here he was born, and here David began his reign. It was the chief city of the tribe of Judah, next to Jerusalem; much celebrated in the patriarchal times, and famous for its high places, where they still sacrificed.

were] called *to grace the solemnity and partake of the feast; they were men of fortune and reputation, and his father's friends, that he might suspect nothing:* and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing; *they went only to wait on him as the king's son, not in the least suspecting his design.* 12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, [even] from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices*. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom; *they came under pretence of joining in the sacrifice, and honouring the king's son in these acts of religion.*

13 And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. 14 And David said unto all his servants that [were] with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not [else] escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword†. 15 And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold thy servants [are ready to do] whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint. 16 And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, [which were] concubines, to keep the house; *supposing that their sex and relation to him, would preserve them from insult.* 17 And the king went forth, and all the people after him, *on foot, in mourning condition,* and tarried in a place that was far off, *to refresh themselves, to wait for others to come up, and put them in order.* 18 And all his servants passed on beside him, and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.

19 Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, *to try his fidelity,* Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king, *that is, with Absalom:* for thou [art] a stranger, and also an exile. 20 Whereas thou camest [but] yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us, *and expose thee and thy people to toil and hardship?* seeing I go whither I may, *am quite in an unsettled and dangerous situation,*

* Ahithophel was capable of doing great mischief, as he was one of David's privy-councillors. Some suppose that he was angry at David's affair with Bathsheba, who was his grand-daughter. He was too cunning to think of coming till he saw what people joined Absalom, and whether his scheme was likely to succeed.

† David chose to leave Jerusalem that he might prevent a surprise, and not expose it to the horrors of a siege. He did not know how it stood affected to him, as Absalom had many adherents there. He could more easily raise an army in the country, where neither the morals nor the political principles of the people were so much corrupted.

return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth [be] with thee. 21 And Ittai answered the king, and said, [As] the LORD liveth, and [as] my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. *This showed great courage and fidelity in a stranger, when the king's own son was a rebel.* 22 And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that [were] with him. 23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, *to see a brave, just, and pious prince reduced to such extremities;* and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

24 And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites [were] with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God; *as the token of the divine presence, in order to consult it on proper occasions, and hoping to draw the people after it;* and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up *to a hill,* until all the people had done passing out of the city. 25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and show me [both] it, and his habitation; *as reverence for the ark might save the priests from Absalom's resentment, and persuade the people to return to their duty.* 26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, [here am] I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him; *I am ready to submit to his will, sensible of my ill deservings.* 27 The king said also unto Zadok the priest, [Art not] thou a seer, *a prophet, and a wise, discerning man, who might sift Absalom's counsellors, and remind the people of their fealty?* return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28 See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me *what Absalom's designs are, and which way he will steer his course.* 29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there. *Thus David sent back the ark, choosing rather to trust God than it.* 30 And David went up by the ascent of [mount] Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot*: and all the people

* He did this, to express his deep humiliation, shame, and concern. He wept for his own sins, and for the unnatural behaviour of his son, and the marks of divine displeasure that attended it.

that [was] with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

31 And [one] told David, saying, Ahithophel [is] among the conspirators with Absalom *. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness; *either infatuate him to give foolish counsel, or let it be rejected or defeated as such.* 32 And it came to pass, that [when] David was come to the top [of the mount,] where he worshipped God †, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him, with his coat rent, and earth upon his head: 33 Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me, *being old, and fitter for counsel than for war.* 34 But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; [as] I [have been] thy father's servant hitherto, so [will] I now also [be] thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. 35 And [hast thou] not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, [that] what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell [it] to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36 Behold, [they have] there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's [son,] and Jonathan Abiathar's [son:] and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. 37 So Hushai David's friend came into the city, *returned so secretly that it was not known he had gone out to David;* and Absalom came into Jerusalem ‡.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THIS story should instruct parents to guard against excessive fondness for their children, or indulgence of them, especially when they discover a bad spirit, and practise wickedness. They should not raise their expectations too high; should keep them especially from pride, and never indulge a proud humour, which is a source of many evils, and sometimes the ruin of youth. Absalom was probably flattered for his beauty, and his being heir to the crown. This promoted that *pride* which *goeth before destruction, and* that *haughty spirit which goeth before a fall.*

* This touched him very sensibly, because he was a wise man, and knew David's secrets, and he took him for his friend, see Psalm xli. 9.

† This was the very spot where Christ wept; there David was looking towards Jerusalem, the ark, and the house of God, and praying; God heard, and sent Hushai to him, (Joshua xvi. 2.), whom he could trust in these circumstances.

‡ It was now that David penned the third psalm, and probably the forty-third, where we may see the state of his mind at this time.

2. We see that those are often most ambitious of honour and preferment, who are least fit for it. *O that I were a judge.* Such a cool, deliberate villain was not likely to do justice, who had violated all the bonds of duty, gratitude, and religion. Humble and modest men are the most fit persons for advancement; who will discharge their duty faithfully, bear their honours and credentials humbly, and not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think.

3. Tyrannical and factious spirits labour to support their own interest, and further their schemes, by aspersing the administration, and begetting an ill opinion of it. The whole history of David shows, that Absalom's complaint of want of justice was an ill-grounded and an abominable falsehood. Thus men often cry out of grievances, and want of redress, when all that they want is preferment, and to get into places of profit and trust. Those who have made the least observation on public affairs, must have seen many instances of this. Men often cover ill designs with specious names; and pretend zeal and concern for liberty and the public, when it is frequently no more than the gratification of their own pride and covetousness which they aim at. They are *presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

4. The greatest affliction of a good man is to be driven from the house and ordinances of God. David speaks of this most feelingly. He parted with the ark reluctantly, and earnestly desired, if it were the will of God, to see it again. Those circumstances which drive holy men from God's house and ordinances, are peculiarly grievous; and their language then is, *When shall I come and appear before God in Zion? How amiable are thy tabernacles! A day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*

5. Whatever circumstances a good man is in, he will patiently and cheerfully submit to the will of God. He may pray, and desire that God would remove his sorrow, and restore this or the other comfort; but if God thinks best that he should be humbled and disappointed, his language should be, as in ver. 26., *let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.* This should be our temper: and in proportion to our trust in God's providence, and concern to practise our duty, will this temper appear reasonable; it will become easy and agreeable; and be an abundant equivalent for the sorrow we endure, and the comfort of which we are deprived.

CHAPTER XVI.

David in the last chapter was flying, and Absalom in Jerusalem; in this we have a further account of their affairs.

1 AND when David was a little past the top [of the hill,] *mount Olivet,* behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred [loaves] of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer-fruits, *or figs,* and a *large leathern* bottle of wine. 2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses [be] for the king's household, *his wives and children, when tired,* to ride on, and the bread and summer-fruit for the young men, *the king's attendants,* to eat, and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink; *though the things I have brought be too mean for thyself, yet they may be of some use for thy family: this was a very seasonable present, now they were entering the wilderness of Judea.* 3 And the king said, And where [is] thy master's son *Mephibosheth**? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father†. 4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine [are] all that [pertained] unto Mephibosheth, *which he hath forfeited by treason.* And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee [that] I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king; *intimating, that he valued the king's favour, more than any gift he could bestow upon him*‡.

5 And when king David came to Bahurim, *in the tribe of Benjamin,* behold, thence came out a man of the family, *or a distant relation,* of the house of Saul, whose name [was] Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came, *thinking it*

* David being uncertain whether the present was Ziba's own, or from Mephibosheth, inquires why he did not come and share his fortune, since he had been so kind to him.

† Mephibosheth thought the family of David was broken, and that the people, when torn by civil wars, and their country wasted, would be glad to have a king of Saul's house, of which he was the eldest branch.

‡ Ziba has been called a false villain, and David censured for his rashness: but there is no evidence in the sacred story, but what Ziba said was true. Mephibosheth appears to me to have formed this scheme, which will more fully appear afterwards, when Mephibosheth comes to be examined.

would be peculiarly grievous to David now, and that Providence justified his conduct. 6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men [were] on his right hand and on his left; *his rage and malice transported him to madness, as the historian hints when he observes how well David was guarded.* 7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial; *or rather, get out, that is, from the kingdom, from which thou deservest to be expelled.* 8 The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou [art taken] in thy mischief, because thou [art] a bloody man*. 9 Then said Abishai, *David's nephew*, the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head†. 10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David, *hath given him an opportunity to vent the malice of his heart, to reproach and humble me.* Who shall then say *to God, who hath permitted this,* Wherefore has thou done so‡? 11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now [may this] Benjamite [do it?] let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him, *hath permitted this as part of my punishment; I will submit to God's will and prepare for greater evils. But,* 12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day; *he durst not be confident, knowing his own fault; but he had some hope that God would be as gracious as this man was malicious, and that his humble submission, might excite the divine compassion.* 13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust; *David's passing on without taking*

* This was perfect railing, for David had shed none of their blood, but the blood of those who did it. He represents him as a usurper and a tyrant; and mentions Absalom's rebellion to sting and vex him.

† There was excellent discipline in David's army, or else he would scarce have asked leave. And David answered with some warmth; perhaps Joab his brother joined in the request; at least it reflected on him, whose murder of Abner was one cause of this reproach.

‡ David knew his guilt in the murder of Uriah, and on this account he was a bloody man, he therefore patiently and humbly submitted to it.

any notice, made this madman the more outrageous. 14 And the king, and all the people that [were] with him, came weary *to Bahurim,* and refreshed themselves there.

15 And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. 16 And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king; *a common compliment, which Absalom took as intended for himself.* 17 And Absalom said unto Hushai, [Is] this thy kindness to thy friend*? why wentest thou not with thy friend? 18 And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide†. 19 And again, whom should I serve? [should I] not [serve] in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence‡.

20 Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. 21 And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that [are] with thee be strong§. 22 So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house, *the place from whence David had seen Bath-sheba:* and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel; *thus Nathan's prophecy was fulfilled,* ch. xii. 11. 23 And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, [was] as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so [was] all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom. *The reason why this hellish counsel was so much approved was, his high reputation; but in this he appeared rather as an oracle of the devil, than as an oracle of God.*

* Absalom had sense enough to know it was inhuman and ungrateful to forsake a friend in distress. He does not say, *to my father,* that would have been a heavy reproach upon himself.

† This was an artful speech. He neither prays personally for Absalom, nor promises him allegiance. He intimates that he was not governed by private affection, but considered the voice of the people as the voice of God; and was bound to prefer the public good to private affection and obligation.

‡ Hushai insinuates here, that his friendship was not entirely alienated from David, because it was transferred to his son; and that he should not offend against David by giving him good counsel. The bait took, and Hushai was admitted to his council.

§ Ahithophel was a wicked counsellor indeed: he sticks at nothing to accomplish his end. His design was to make the breach irreparable, that there might be no prospect of reconciliation, and that the people might fight desperately. Whereas, if a reconciliation took place, all who joined Absalom would probably have been put to death.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We here see to what an height of folly and wickedness a spirit of malice and revenge may carry a man. Shimei abused David, cursed him, belied him, threw stones at him, though he was so well guarded, and he did it at the hazard of his life. Passionate men are madmen, and know not what they do. Let us be careful to rule our own spirits, pray for divine grace to guard us, and resist the first risings of wrath and revenge; for we know not how far we may be transported, what evil we may do, or what injury we may suffer.

2. We learn, that the most innocent persons may be falsely censured and basely abused: so David was. He had more than once spared Saul's life, was at a distance when he was slain, was kind to Mephibosheth, and punished those that murdered Ishbosheth; yet all was laid to his charge. We should not think it strange if we are falsely accused, and condemned, by rash and passionate men, who regard neither what they say nor do.

3. Humble, tender spirits will turn reproaches into reproofs, and own the hand of God in them. David knew his guiltiness in other things, and therefore humbly submitted. And so should we in like circumstances. We have been guilty of other crimes, if not of those for which we are reproached, and God thus brings them to remembrance. His hand strikes us by the hand or tongue of an enemy. The strife of tongues calls us to repentance and humiliation. Instead of being provoked, we should endeavour to get good by it, and imitate the example of David in patience and submission; and a greater than David, even Christ, who, *when he was reviled, reviled not again.*

4. Many excel in worldly wisdom, who have no religion at all. Ahithophel was an infamous character, though so much reverenced and trusted as a profound politician. Wisdom is good, and sagacity useful; but honesty is the best policy. *The fear of the Lord is true wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that keep his testimonies.*

CHAPTER XVII.

Ahithophel's counsel is overthrown by Hushai's, according to God's appointment; secret intelligence is sent to David; and Ahithophel hangeth himself.

1 MOREOVER Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night*. And I will come upon him while he [is] weary and weak-handed, *weary with the march, dejected by the rebellion, and before his forces are come together,* and will make him afraid, *strike terror into him by the suddenness of the attack:* and all the people that [are] with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only, *and spare the people:* 3 And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest [is] as if all returned; *he being once taken out of the way, the rest will presently submit to thee:* [so] all the people shall be in peace, *and an end be put to the war at once.* 4 And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel†. 5 Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith; *though this counsel was universally agreeable, yet Absalom wished to hear Hushai's opinion.* 6 And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do [after] his saying? if not, speak thou, *give thy opinion freely.* 7 And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given [is] not good at this time, *will not suit present circumstances.* 8 For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they [be] mighty men, *and therefore not so easily surprised and vanquished as Ahithophel supposes;* and they [be] chafed in their minds, as a bear

* A council was called, and it was agreed that David and his adherents should be cut off. The question, was, how it should be done. Ahithophel contrived before that the rebellion might be continued; here, that it might end in victory. For this purpose he would have a thousand choice men out of each tribe; and lest Absalom should spare his father, or come to an agreement with him, he would head the expedition himself and set out that very night.

† It was good counsel upon Absalom's scheme. The sooner the attack was made, the more likely it would be to succeed; it suited Absalom's inclination; he could pursue his pleasures at home without being hindered; Ahithophel would take the execution of it upon himself, and save him from imbruing his hands in his father's blood, which some small remains of humanity might make him wish to avoid.

robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father [is] a man of war, and will not lodge with the people, *they are old experienced soldiers, used to hardship, and are desperately enraged.* 9 Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some [other] place, *so that you will not be likely to find him; or if you do, his men will fight desperately for him:* and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom: *this will strike a panic into the rest.* 10 And he also [that is] valiant, whose heart [is] as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father [is] a mighty man, and [they] which [be] with him [are] valiant men, *who will pursue their victory with the greatest resolution.* 11 Therefore I counsel that all Israel, *that is, all the fighting men,* be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that [is] by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person, *to encourage them with thy presence, and to have the honour of the victory; which, he suggests, Ahithophel would deprive him of.* 12 So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground, *insensibly, plentifully, and universally*;* and of him and of all the men that [are] with him there shall not be left so much as one, *we shall thus leave no place unsearched, and shall find him wherever he is.* 13 Moreover, if he be gotten into a *fortified* city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there†. 14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite [is] better than the counsel of Ahithophel. *Absalom's men, having a bad cause, were cowardly, and liked this scheme because there was less danger in it; but the historian takes notice that the hand of the Lord was in it; they intended one thing, and he another.* For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

15 Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled. 16 Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the

* This is a beautiful simile of a large army overspreading a country.

† All Hushai wanted by this advice was, to gain time for David to gather his forces and put them in order; and as it suited Absalom's vanity and cruelty, he readily fell in with it.

plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that [are] with him; *lest Absalom change his measures, and follow Ahithophel's advice.* 17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by En-rogel, *the fuller's fountain,* for they might not be seen to come into the city, *being well known, and the friends of David;* and a wench went, *under pretence of fetching water,* and told them; and they went and told king David. 18 Nevertheless a lad, *one of Absalom's spies,* saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, *who was a friend of David's,* which had a *dry* well in his court; whither they went down. 19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon, *to dry in the sun,* and the thing was not known. 20 And when Absalom's servants, *who were sent to pursue them,* came to the woman to the house, they said, Where [is] Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find [them], they returned to Jerusalem. 21 And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you, *and they did not know but this counsel would be followed.* 22 Then David arose, and all the people that [were] with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan; *so that though it was in the night, not one of them deserted, or in the hurry of passing the river not one was lost, which was a remarkable providence.*

23 And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed*, he saddled [his] ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father. 24 Then David came to Mahanaim, *in the tribe of Gad.* And Absalom, *after he had gathered a great army, according to Hushai's counsel,* v. 11., passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

25 And Absalom made Amasa *his cousin* captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa [was] a man's son, whose name [was] Ithra, *or Jether, an Ishmaelite by birth but* an Israelite *by*

* When Ahithophel saw which way things were going, and that David would gain time, he concluded that he would get the better, and that the storm would fall on him, on account of his treachery and execrable advice. He was also vexed to see himself slighted, his wise counsel rejected, and all his hopeful prospects blasted at once.

religion or profession, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah, Joab's mother, *and David's nephew, being his sister's son.* 26 So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.

27 And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon*, and Machir, *the guardian of Mephibosheth,* the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, *a man of great age, great wealth, and yet great piety and generosity of heart; all these* 28 Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, *all household stuff and furniture that was necessary,* and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched [corn,] and beans, and lentiles, and parched [pulse,] 29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that [were] with him, to eat, *supplies for man and beast:* for they said, The people [is] hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness; *these things therefore will be welcome to them; and their being so cheerfully brought, was a strong proof of affectionate loyalty, and must have been peculiarly pleasing to David.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. See to what lengths of wickedness ambition will carry men. It cancels all the ties of relation, gratitude, and duty; it made this rash, mad youth thirst for his father's blood; even his throne and his kingdom would not satisfy him without that. He felt no reluctance at Ahithophel's horrid scheme. May we guard against ambition and pride, and cultivate the humble graces of the gospel; that we may with confidence appeal to God, that *our hearts are not haughty, nor our eyes lofty.*

2. We learn, that the providence of God over-rules the counsels of men to serve his own purposes. Ahithophel's counsel was good for Absalom, Hushai's for David; but it appears, from *v.* 14., that God had determined before to defeat Absalom's schemes, and therefore frustrated the former, and inclined them to hearken to the other, though against all the principles of sound policy. God has the hearts of all men in his hand; presides over the counsels of men, and whatever they determine, *his counsel shall*

* He was probably made governor of the country, in the room of Hanun his brother, who had treated David's ambassadors so ill. He might disapprove that indignity, and showed his gratitude by coming so seasonably to David's relief.

stand. This is an encouragement for all who fear God to *commit their way to him, and trust in him to bring it to pass.*

3. Observe in Ahithophel, the sad end of pride and disappointed expectations. The people believed him to be an oracle, and he thought himself so. And now, to see his counsel neglected, upon which his safety and provision depended, mortified him to such a degree, that he could not bear it; and while his soul was loaded with all the horrors of guilt, treachery, rebellion, incest, parricide, he destroyed himself; and to prevent any possibility of repentance, died in the very act of self-murder. So perished the great politician of that age. He had wisdom enough to govern a state, but not to rule his own spirit. He had composure enough to set his house in order, but not to check his passions, or bear a disappointment. He took great care of his house and family, but none for his soul. Thus died Ahithophel, *as a fool dieth.* Oh *let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength; but let him that glorieth glory in the Lord.*

4. God often raises up friends to his people when they are in the greatest distress. So he did to David here, Shobi and Machir, and Barzillai. What a comfort was it to him in his sorrow and banishment, to find friends, and such friends, who furnished him with such suitable and seasonable supplies. *O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. Blessed is the man who putteth his trust in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. The lions may lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

We have here David's preparation to engage the rebels; the defeat of Absalom's forces; his death and burial; and the news of the victory brought to David.

1 AND David numbered the people that [were] with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.
2 And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai

the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also. 3 But the people, *remembering Ahithophel's advice, to smite the king only, and concluding that his life was chiefly aimed at,* answered, thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now [thou art] worth ten thousand of us; *it would be more injury to the kingdom and more advantage to the enemy if he was slain, than thousands of them; but if he lived he would be able to raise new forces to oppose their design:* therefore now [it is] better that thou *stay there and* succour us out of the city. 4 And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best, I will do*. And the king stood by the gate side *encouraging and praying for them,* and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands. 5 And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, [Deal] gently for my sake with the young man, [even] with Absalom, *as if his fault was rather to be imputed to his youth than his nature; from paternal affection, and a pious concern that he might live to repent of his folly and wickedness, he desires to save him.* And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

6 So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim; 7 Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David†; and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand [men.] 8 For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured‡.

9 And Absalom met the servants of David, *who it should seem made no attempt to seize him.* And Absalom rode upon a mule *and fled hastily;* and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that [was] under him went away. 10 And a certain man saw [it,] and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

* This freed his mind from the reluctance he must feel in going out against one of his own subjects, and fighting against his son; and no doubt Providence overruled it, that he might not interpose to save Absalom's life.

† One body of David's forces came out of the wood, the other lay in ambush on the skirts of it. The men who came out of the wood seeming to fly before Absalom into the wood again, he pursued them; upon which the other part of David's army closed in, and thus Absalom and his people were hemmed in and easily destroyed.

‡ This was perhaps by thickets, or bogs and pits, or wild beasts in the caves; by one means or other more were destroyed by the wood, than in the action itself.

11 And Joab said unto the man that told him, And behold, thou sawest [him,] and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten [shekels] of silver, and a girdle*. 12 And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand [shekels] of silver in mine hand, [yet] would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none [touch] the young man Absalom. 13 Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldst have set thyself against [me†.] 14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee; *it is no time to stand talking here.* And, *concluding there would be no peace to the kingdom, nor safety to himself and David's adherents, if Absalom survived,* he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he [was] yet alive in the midst of the oak. 15 And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him. 16 Joab blew the trumpet, *sounded a retreat, thinking the people would return to their allegiance now they had no one to head them;* and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. 17 And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him, *as a monument of fame*‡: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, (see chap. xiv. 27.), *something like the Egyptian pyramids,* which [is] in the king's dale, *near Jerusalem;* for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place. *There no doubt he intended to be buried, but Providence provided him a different kind of grave.*

19 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies§ 20 And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt

* A captain's commission, denoted by giving him a military girdle or sash. *See* Isa. xxii. 21.

† He intimates here, that it would not only have been disobedience to the king, but he would have run the hazard of his own life; even Joab himself would have been as forward as any one to have informed against him, and to ingratiate himself with the king by accusing the man who had slain his son.

‡ Some of the Jews say, it still remains; and that it was a custom for every passenger to throw a stone at it, saying, Thus it shall be done to a rebellious son.

§ There must be good discipline in the army, when even Ahimaaz durst not run on such an occasion without leave.

not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead*. 21 Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran. 22 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? 23 But howsoever, [said he,] let me run. And he said unto him, Run. *He was willing to go, whatever the consequences might be, not from the hope of reward, but being willing to bring good tidings to the king, whom he loved, and out of prudence and tenderness to prepare him for the news of Absalom's death.* Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi, *who went the straight road over the mountains; being on level ground he got sooner.* 24 And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone. 25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he [be] alone, [there is] tidings in his mouth, *good tidings; because, if the army was routed, many would have come flying from different ways.* And he came apace, and drew near. 26 And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold [another] man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings. 27 And the watchman said, Methinketh the running of the foremost, is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, *who was remarkable for his speed.* And the king said, He [is] a good man, and cometh with good tidings; *a good soldier, and would not run away like a coward, and one that loves me well, and therefore would not afflict me with evil tidings.* 28 And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well: *before he came up to say any thing particular, he cried out in triumph, all is well;* and *then, with the reverence of a loyal subject,* he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king and, *with the piety of a priest, he* said, Blessed [be] the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king. 29 And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? *He expressed no joy till he had heard how it had fared with Absalom.* And Ahimaaz answered,

* Joab knew David better than Ahimaaz did; he was sensible it would be unwelcome news, and lessen David's regard for him, therefore he chose to send some other person.

When Joab sent the king's servant, and [me] thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what [it was*] 30 And the king said [unto him,] Turn aside, [and] stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still. 31 And, behold, Cushi came; and Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee; *he says nothing of Absalom.* 32 And the king said unto Cushi, [Is] the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do [thee] hurt, be as [that] young man [is.] *He told him in the most decent manner that he was dead, yet so as to express his good wishes for the king, whilst he informed him of this affecting stroke.* And the king was much moved; *he did not stay to hear the circumstances or extent of the victory, or the manner of Absalom's death, but retired immediately to give vent to his grief,* and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went *up the stairs he bemoaned himself, and* thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! *The words are full of passion, the effect of excessive love and grief; one would hope of deep concern also, at the recollection of his heinous wickedness, and for his everlasting state; else we can scarcely think that David, with all his partial fondness, would have been so much affected, or wished to have died for him.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE infer hence, that it is the part of wisdom to hearken to the advice of inferiors, and to follow it when it is founded on good reasons. Thus David did in hearkening to the remonstrances of his servants against his going to battle. Stiffness and obstinacy are mischievous qualities; but they are too commonly the fault of superiors, are founded upon a bad principle,—pride, and are generally productive of hurtful consequences. *In the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

2. See in this story, the miserable end of an undutiful and rebellious son; and let all children and young people *hear and fear.* This infamous wretch, Absalom, met with his death in a very surprising and uncommon manner. There are many ways

* Ahimaaz did know of Absalom's death, but was not acquainted with the particulars of it; he leaves the matter doubtful, as Cushi was to inform the king of that matter; he gives him room to expect the worst, and so prepares his mind for what the next messenger was to say.

of being slain in battle; but this was an unheard-of instance, and was designed to make his punishment more remarkable, and the hand of Providence in it the more apparent. How quickly did his rebellion come to an end, and all his gay dreams vanish! His pillar of honour was turned into a monument of shame; his beauty perished in the dust, and his memory rotteth. How awful, and yet how righteous was the judgment of God on this wicked son! God is still displeased with undutiful children; and he will, either in this world or another, make their plagues wonderful. *Honour*, therefore, *thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

3. What a dreadful shock does the death of a wicked child give a pious parent! How terribly was David's heart wounded, to think of his son going down to destruction with such multiplied and aggravated guilt upon his head. He was willing to have died for him, to save him from such complete and hopeless ruin. Let parents, to prevent such painful reflections, take care to *bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, and guard against that excessive fondness for them, which prevents their correcting and restraining them when they do evil, and which was at once the ruin of Absalom, and the grief of David. And may we earnestly pray, that God would give to our children *an upright heart, that they may know and serve the God of their fathers with a perfect heart and a willing mind, that it may be well with them for ever.*

CHAPTER XIX.

David ceaseth to mourn through Joab's influence, and returns to his kingdom; Shimei meets him, and is pardoned; he has an interview with Mephibosheth and Barzillai; and an unhappy contest arises between the tribes about bringing him home.

1 AND it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom. 2 And the victory that day was [turned] into mourning unto all the people, *it cast a damp upon their joy:* for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son; *and they were afflicted with him.* 3 And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away

when they flee in battle*. 4 But the king covered his face, *like a deep mourner, who would neither see nor be seen,* and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son! 5 And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, *as if they had committed some crime and were ashamed to show their faces, and hast disappointed their hopes of praise and reward,* which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines; *all of which Absalom struck at;* 6 In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well; *by this strange and preposterous conduct thou hast in effect declared, that thou hast no concern for them or for any body but Absalom, and that thou hast no pleasure in their safety or success.* 7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants, *thank them for their service, and congratulate them on their success:* for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befel thee from thy youth until now; *than all the evils of his youth, when he had friends and companions about him*†. 8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate, *the place of concourse and judgment.* And all the people came before the king, *to congratulate him, and profess subjection and allegiance to him;* for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

9 And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, *blaming one another for beginning and encouraging the rebellion, and their remissness in bringing the king back,* saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. 10 And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back? *This was addressed to their elders and rulers.*

* They did not enter in triumph, but by some secret way, as if they had lost the battle; not through the gate, lest David should look upon them with an evil eye, as those who had killed his beloved son.

† This was insolent and uncourtly language; but Joab thought this warmth necessary, to rouse David from his lethargy, and preserve him from impending mischief; and it had the desired effect.

11 And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, [even] to his house*? 12 Ye [are] my brethren, ye [are] my bones and my flesh; wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king? *You stand in the nearest relation to him, and therefore should be the first to show him respect.* 13 And say ye to Amasa†, [Art] thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab. *He mentions his relationship to him, as what disposed him to pardon, and promises him preferment in the room of Joab, to humble his insolence and punish his disobedience.* 14 And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as [the heart of] one man; so that they sent [this word] unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants, *who are ready to receive thee and return to their obedience.* 15 So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

16 And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which [was] of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David. 17 And [there were] a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king‡. 18 And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan; 19 And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. 20 For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: there-

* As things were not entirely brought to order after such confusion, David judged the advice and interposition of some people of wisdom, weight, and influence were necessary to effect it, and therefore sent to the priests, as being his friends and men of authority, who were proper to negotiate the business with the elders of Judah. Perhaps many of that tribe had joined Absalom; which was peculiarly ungrateful, considering David's kindness to them. They might despair of pardon, and therefore were backward in the matter. He let them know that others were ready to do it, and wondered that they, of all the tribes of Israel, were so backward.

† Amasa was his nephew, whom he was particularly desirous to bring over to his interest, and who (judging his own case desperate) might persuade Judah to hinder or delay the king's return.

‡ Shimei brought a thousand men with him, to show his power and influence, and hoped, by bringing so considerable a body, to secure his pardon. He went over Jordan to show peculiar respect, and passed over before the king.

fore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king *. 21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed? 22 And David *gave him a reproof becoming a great and good king, and* said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me; *urge me to act against my own inclinations, to make others fear execution, and set the people against me?* shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? *shall any thing sully the glory of this day, and be cause of lamentation in this time of universal joy?* for do not I know that I [am] this day king over Israel? *Not over a party in it, but over all Israel, and have power to punish and pardon whom I please?* 23 Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die *at this time, and merely upon account of what is past.* And the king sware unto him, *confirmed it with an oath, and bound him to his good behaviour.*

24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came [again] in peace; *thus seeming as if he was greatly affected at the king's exile.* 25 And it came to pass when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth? *as justice, gratitude, prudence, and a regard to thy own interest required, lest Absalom should have destroyed thee as a competitor.* 26 And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant [is] lame †. 27 And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king [is] as an angel of God: do therefore [what is] good in thine eyes. 28 For all [of] my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy

* He pleaded, that he came first to submit to him; and it is remarkable that he calls himself *of the house of Joseph*, being a Benjamite, of the family of Saul. He would have come ill recommended to David under that character, therefore he mentions *the house of Joseph*, a tribe of the nearest akin to the other, Benjamin being his beloved brother.

† This is a very lame excuse, for he might have had another beast; he could probably find one now to meet the king; he might have applied to David for one; he ate at his table; he must know when he went; there was time enough, between the preparation for the king's flight, and Absalom's coming to Jerusalem; there was no reason why he should not have gone; it would have been far better than to have staid in that beastly manner at home. But he complained that his servant had used him ill.

servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king*? 29 And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land. *David was not willing to hear any more of the matter, confirms the former appointment of Ziba to be his steward, and restores him half the estate without any trouble or expense to him.* 30 And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house; *he answers with prodigious zeal, that he was content with any thing, since the king was returned safe*†.

31 And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan; *he came to pay his respects, and to bring him part of the way, having hospitably entertained him.* 32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, [even] fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he [was] a very great man; *a rich man, and had a very generous heart.* 33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem, *as a particular friend and favourite.* 34 And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? *A very wise, pious, and grateful reply. He was unfit to travel so far, he had but a short time to live; another reason was,* 35 I [am] this day fourscore years old: [and] can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king‡? 36 Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan

* He could not but acknowledge the king's kindness to him, and therefore he had no right to cry to the king, which he would have done, and should have done, if he had been slandered; but the meaning seems to be, that he submitted to the king's clemency, and hoped from his well-known goodness that he would forgive him.

† There is no reason to believe that Ziba had slandered him, but that the charge against him was true. The neglect of his dress, and his expressions of zeal and concern, might only be to cover his intentions if the thing had miscarried. David was now disposed to pardon every one, especially a descendant of Saul, on account of Shimei's aspersion, and his oath to Jonathan. If Mephibosheth was indeed innocent, I think David's affection for him would have engaged him to punish Ziba, according to the law of God against a false witness, Deut. xix. 19. For Mephibosheth's innocence, we have only his own testimony; for Ziba's, we have David's. His coming to him seems to have been quite disinterested; and David's not punishing him, confirms it. Therefore the outcry made against David is unjust, and has no foundation: but he appears in this affair as an eminent example of clemency and forgiveness.

‡ The king's kindness would be ill bestowed upon him, as his relish for the

with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? *He was desirous of expressing his dutiful affection as far as he was able, but had no expectation of a reward, for he had done nothing but his duty.* 37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, [and be buried] by the grave of my father and of my mother. *His fourth reason was, that he was willing to spend his remaining days at home, and be buried with his ancestors; but that he might not seem rude, he desires the king to transfer the kindness intended him, to his son.* But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee. 38 And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, [that] will I do for thee: *he leaves it to the old gentleman's choice, and intimates that if he had any petition to make afterwards, he might be sure it should be granted.* 39 And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place. *He took his leave of him with great affection; thanked him and prayed for him, and took Chimham with him. In* Jeremiah xli. 7., *we read of an inheritance of his at Bethlehem; probably David gave him part of his paternal inheritance.* 40 Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel; *the people of Judah came entirely and unanimously, and the half of Israel; perhaps those on the other side Jordan; and the other tribes at length came in.*

41 And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away *secretly, and not desired our assistance and consent; it was a public act, and there should have been a convention of the states;* and have brought the king, and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan? 42 And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king [is] near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's [cost?] or hath he given us any gift? *They plead their relation to their king, that they had no private gain, it was only to testify their duty and affection.* 43 And the

pleasures of a court and of the senses was almost gone; besides, he would rather be a burden than of any service, and would only stand in the way of those who might be useful. See ORTON's *Discourses to the Aged*, Disc. II. on Barzillai's Refusal of David's Invitation.

men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, *Simeon being intermixed with Judah, probably came with them,* and we have also more [right] in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? *we ought to have been consulted in an affair of such consequence, and esteem ourselves slighted and ill used.* And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel; *the quarrel increased, and the men of Judah were more hot and passionate; and this foolish difference occasioned a new rebellion, as we shall find in the next chapter.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We hence learn, that there is danger of our passion and grief becoming excessive, and it is our duty to restrain it, whoever may reprove us for it. Though Joab was rude in his reproof, David was so far influenced by him as to appear in public. It was an absurd passion, especially when the people were so resolute, and God had been so gracious. Let us learn to guard our minds against excessive transports of grief, or any thing which may lead us to neglect our duty, though we should be reproved for it in an unbecoming manner by our inferiors, or with heat. Let us not consider who the reprover is, but the reproof, and endeavour to amend what is amiss.

2. Good services for the public will be remembered and acknowledged, though they seem for a time to be forgotten. David's people rebelled against him; but at length they began to recollect his services to them, in delivering them from their enemies, particularly the Philistines, and saw their own ingratitude. We ought generously to serve mankind, and labour to promote their happiness, whether they are grateful or not. But this is our encouragement, that all are not insensible, all are not ungrateful, and they who are so at present, will probably come to a better mind. Above all, God is never unmindful; *he is not unrighteous to forget our labours of love.*

3. Men often blame others for backwardness to a good work, when they are really to blame themselves. The people of Israel were at strife who it was that began the rebellion; the people blamed the elders, and the elders the people: they took as much time in censuring one another for not bringing the king back, as

would have done the business; and they should heartily have joined in it. It is easier to find fault, than to mend. If each in his respective station would set about reforming his own manners, and those that are about him, instead of condemning the tardiness and lukewarmness of others, things would soon grow better, and the world be greatly mended.

4. We have a lively example of clemency and gratitude in David's forgiving Shimei, and overlooking Mephibosheth's ill design, and great ingratitude. Thus *his throne was established by mercy*. It is great, and the best prerogative of kings, to forgive. His gratitude to Barzillai, for his hospitality, deserves praise and imitation. Let us be always ready to return kindness, and be grateful to our friends and benefactors, especially those who have helped us in times of distress. No future wealth, honour, or ease, should make us forget them and our obligations to them.

5. We have in Barzillai an example for aged persons to restrain their desires after any temporal good. I go to court! It is time for me to think of going to my grave. My relish for diversions, and the delights of a court, are gone; and my capacity for business almost gone too. Let me return home, to set my house and heart in order, and prepare for my long home. Let the aged learn from this venerable old man, what their disposition should be; to have as little to do with the world as possible; to contract their business; to lay aside their schemes and projects for this world; and be dead to all the delights of sense; to think much of dying; and be daily preparing for their last awful change.

6. Aged persons should not grudge young ones those employments which they are unfit for, or are unsuitable to their declining circumstances in life. *Let Chimham go;* he is young, and fit for business; he can relish the hurry and pleasures of a court. It is very unreasonable for aged persons to tie up those that are young to their own necessary confinement, or debar them of innocent and lawful amusements; this is doing them harm, and prejudicing youth against all their wisest instructions and most friendly counsels.

7. We learn here the origin and consequences of strife. The origin is pride; the bad consequences, violent passions, angry words, and injuries. The people of Israel and Judah, through pride and impatience of contempt, quarrelled about a punctilio; they could not bear what seemed to be a slight. *Only by pride*

cometh contention. The men of Judah were fiercer than the men of Israel, though in fact they were to blame for taking such steps without their brethren. Men too often supply in passion what is wanting in reason and argument. And it may be observed, that those whose words are fiercest, have generally least truth and reason on their side. But let all such angry, passionate persons know, that God takes notice of every fierce word they speak, as he did of the people of Judah, and is highly displeased with it. Therefore, to prevent all the ill consequences of strife to ourselves, our brethren, and our religion, let us rule our spirits, and bridle our tongues.

CHAPTER XX.

Gives an account of Sheba's rebellion, and his destruction; and of David's great officers.

1 AND there happened to be there *when the difference related in the former chapter happened,* a man of Belial, whose name [was] Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite; *a turbulent, furious man, probably one of Saul's family, and Absalom's captain;* and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse*: every man to his tents, O Israel; *let us go from him, and choose another king.* 2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, [and] followed Sheba the son of Bichri†: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem, *not a man of them forsook him.*

3 And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women [his] concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward‡, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

* He here speaks contemptuously of David, and said, If they have ten parts in David, let them have him altogether.

† This must be taken with limitation; not all the people, not Shimei and his men, but the greatest part of the people.

‡ He ordered them to some place of retirement, as they were not fit to appear abroad, for that would have renewed the remembrance of Absalom's wickedness; a crime not to be named, and which was a reproach to David and his house. In this place David shut them up for life.

4 Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present*. 5 So Amasa went to assemble [the men of] Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him; *they were backward to fight his battles, though forward to attend his retinue being attached to Joab.* 6 And David said to Abishai, *Joab's brother,* Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than [did] Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, *his guard and standing forces,* and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us. 7 And there went out after him Joab's men, *his own regiment, and he himself went with them as a volunteer,* and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men; *David thought himself safe enough without them at Jerusalem, having the love of the people there:* and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri. 8 When they [were] at the great stone which [is] in Gibeon, *a place of rendezvous for the people of Judah,* Amasa went before them, *as commander in chief.* And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle [with] a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out†. 9 And Joab said to Amasa, [Art] thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him‡. 10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that [was] in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth [rib,] and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. 11 And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, *by command of his master, who feared some confusion might take place,* He that favoureth Joab, and he that [is] for David; [let him go] after Joab; *he that would have David king, and Joab general, let him follow Joab.* 12 And Amasa *was not quite dead, but* wallowed in *his* blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him

* David took this opportunity to rid himself of Joab's insolence. He thought the people would come to their old general, who appeared to have great influence among them; and commands them to come within three days to receive orders from him.

† Joab had no armour on, but girded his garment about him in haste, and put his sword in a large scabbard, that it might easily fall out when he bowed, which it seemed to do accidentally, so that there was no suspicion.

‡ So the easterns do to this day.

stood still *at this shocking sight, and were concerned to see him so basely murdered.* 13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri, *not knowing that Amasa was killed.*

14 And he, *that is, Sheba,* went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, *a city in the north of Canaan, to excite the people to arms,* and to Beth-maachah, and all the Berites, *of the tribe of Benjamin, his relations and friends, who were influenced by him:* and they were gathered together, and went also after him, *that is, Joab, and the soldiers of David followed him.* 15 And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that [were] with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down. 16 Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee; *her sex and character recommended what she said, and she came to make a proposal to the general;* 17 And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, [Art] thou Joab? And he answered, I [am he.] Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear. 18 Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask [counsel] at Abel: and so they ended [the matter *.] 19 I [am one of them that are] peaceable [and] faithful in Israel, *peaceable and loyal; she speaks in the name of the city:* thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel; *a great city, which hath many villages under it, here called daughters, and dependant upon it:* why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD? *this is doing injury to the public.* 20 And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy; *I would not voluntarily do the least injury.* 21 The matter [is] not so, *you have not been rightly informed:* but a man of mount Ephraim, *a Benjamite, but dwelling at mount Ephraim,* Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, [even] against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall †.

* As if she had said, Abel is a place so renowned for wisdom, that if differences arose, the parties came there and left it to their arbitration, and abided by it as an oracle; or, as in the margin, *they plainly spake in the beginning, saying, Surely they will ask of Abel, and so make an end;* intimating, that Joab should have asked why they admitted Sheba, and gently reminds him of the law of God to propose capitulation, Deut. xx, 10. Whereas Joab in the height of his rage determined to take it by storm, without sending conditions of peace.

† This woman knew the mind of the citizens, and thought, as they were loyal,

22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom, *and prudently treated with them.* And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast [it] out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king; *he spared all Sheba's confederates, and returned to inform the king of his success.*

23 Now Joab [was] over all the host of Israel; *he returned with so much merit and popularity, and appeared to have such interest in the soldiers, that David durst not displace him:* and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [was] over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites: 24 And Adoram [was] over the tribute*: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud [was] recorder, *or writer of the chronicles:* 25 And Sheva [was] scribe, *or secretary of state:* and Zadok and Abiathar [were] the priests: 26 And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David; *he succeeded Ahithophel as president of the council.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. See the uncertainty of human affairs. David was no sooner restored to his kingdom, than fresh troubles arose, like clouds after the rain. We see it often so in private life. Let us therefore not be confident, nor think our mountain stands so strong, that it may not soon be moved. We should habituate ourselves to self-denial, mortification, and deadness to the world, and fix our thoughts and hopes on a better. *Set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.* Then you will be better able to bear the changes of life, and be more likely to improve them.

2. We here see the truth of Solomon's remark, that *the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water.* It was a little difference at first between Judah and Israel, who should bring home the king; but they perverted one another's words and designs; and their trifling quarrel became big with great consequences. Had each side yielded a little, all had been prevented. *Yielding pacifieth great offences.*

they would be glad to save themselves from this danger. They could not hinder Sheba from getting into the city, but they could choose to harbour him there.

* Adoram was treasurer, or over the tributes towards building the temple. He was now very young, and continued all David's and Solomon's time: at length he was slain by some rebellious Israelites. 1 Kings xii. 18.

3. What a dangerous thing is an ambitious spirit. Joab again, to gratify his pride, killed his rival: he could not bear disappointment. This was the greatest treachery, especially as it was in a critical season. But when pride reigns, reason and conscience, justice and humanity, are all suppressed and silenced. Happy those in private life, who have not such temptations to pride and ambition; and especially happy are those of humble and contented minds.

4. We may infer, that one way for contention to cease is, for the differing parties to explain themselves. Most disputes are continued, and grow warm, for want of knowing what is disputed. Joab thought the citizens of Abel were all treacherous men, and in the heat of passion determined to destroy them with Sheba, for his offence; but this wise woman cleared up the matter, and put an end to the rebellion. When people are prejudiced against those they differ with, they will not hear what they have to say, or even condescend so far as to explain themselves. But contentions in private life, and differences among relations, and even neighbours, are so shameful and injurious, that every wise man should be willing to hearken to every thing that is likely to heal the breach, and promote accommodation. *Study those things that make for peace. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

CHAPTER XXI.

The Gibeonites are avenged; the Philistine giant slain; and the bones of Saul and Jonathan are buried.

1 THEN there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year*; *which they thought at first was a common calamity, but when it continued so long, they thought it was judicial, and in consequence of some extraordinary sin*; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, [It is] for Saul, and for

* There are different opinions about the date of this story. A Jewish writer says it was early in David's reign: and this seems probable; for it is said, *in the days of David*, and not, *after these things*, as in other places. The historian having mentioned David's sin, goes through the effects of it without interrupting the story, and then mentions several natural events out of due order of time. This seems confirmed by comparing ver. 20. with ch. viii. 1.

[his] bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites*. 2 And the king called the Gibeonites†, and said unto them (now the Gibeonites [were] not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them, Joshua ix. 15., and Saul sought to slay them, in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah; *sought how he might do it with some colour of law and justice*‡:) 3 Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD? *He inquired what satisfaction he should make them for the injury, that they might pray for the people, and that God might forgive their sin.* 4 And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel, *except those afterwards mentioned.* And he said, What ye shall say, [that] will I do for you. 5 And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us [that] we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, 6 Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *where Saul lived before and after he was king, to make their punishment more shameful and remarkable,* [whom] the LORD did choose, *and therefore his guilt was the more aggravated.* And the king said, I will give [them,] *that others may learn to keep God's covenant, and not oppress strangers.* 7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that [was] between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul; *lest he should incur the same punishment as Saul had done.* 8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal§ the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up

* We have no account of this event in the history of Saul; some think it was when the priests were slain at Nob, but the time is uncertain. It is probable he was directed to give the Gibeonites such satisfaction as they required.

† They lived in their own city, and were hewers of wood, and drawers of water.

‡ Saul pretended that it was neither profitable, honourable, nor safe for God's people to suffer any of those accursed nations to be incorporated with them, and enjoy the same church privileges as they did. The Gibeonites had one city in Judah, and three in Benjamin; Saul wanted to have their land, and accordingly destroyed some of them and banished the rest, and gave their possessions to his children, grandchildren, and kinsmen, 1 Sam. xxii. 7. His descendants and relations were instruments in this execution, and therefore it is called *his bloody house;* and they still possessed their lands.

§ Or rather, Merab's five sons, the sister of Michal, who was to have been David's wife. She died while they were young, and Michal, having no children, brought them up. Such were commonly called their children among the ancients. David has been charged with contriving the death of these sons, because they

for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite: 9 And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell [all] seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first [days,] in the beginning of barley harvest.

10 And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night*. 11 And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done; *which was a tacit reproof for his not taking care of the bones of Saul and Jonathan.* 12 And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa: 13 And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. 14 And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was entreated for the land, *his displeasure was turned away.* See Psalm lxv.

15 Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines; and David waxed faint *with the combat, the Philistine giant taking him at a disadvantage, and being stronger than he.* 16 And Ishbi-benob, which [was] of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear [weighed] three hundred [shekels] of brass in weight, *his spear's head being about twelve pounds,* he being girded with a new [sword†,] thought to have slain David. 17 But

would be the revival of Saul's family in his kingdom. But there is no ground for this. It was plainly the will of God, who ordered they should hang so long; which was contrary to the law of taking down executed criminals before the evening. And God's sending rain was a plain proof that he was not displeased. If David was the villain which Chubb and others think, why did he spare Mephibosheth and his family? It was evident those persons had a hand in the Gibeonites' murder, being of Saul's bloody house; and the Israelites might be justly punished with famine for joining in the murder, or for not opposing it. So that the character of David is clear from all suspicion.

* Rizpah, by the assistance of her friends and servants, spread a tent near the bodies, that she might prevent their being torn or mangled: probably knowing that they were to hang there till God, by sending rain, gave evidence of his being reconciled to the people.

† Or rather, with a new girdle, that is, advanced to some new military post, was desirous of the honour of slaying the Israelites' king.

Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel, *who is our guide and glory, and makes us great and illustrious.* 18 And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which [was] of the sons of the giant. 19 And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim a Beth-lehemite, slew [the brother of] Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear [was] like a weaver's beam. 20 And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of [great] stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant. 21 And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea the brother of David slew him. 22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants; *David's brave men soon overcame them, though they were so much larger and stronger.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. When calamities come upon us, it is good to inquire of the Lord; to pray to him, that he would show us the meaning and intention of such dispensations, lest the great end of Providence should be defeated, our improvement prevented, and we be exposed to heavier woes. Thus Job prayed, *show me wherefore thou contendest with me.*

2. We here see God's regard to public ordinances, and his justice in punishing perjury. The original treaty was gained by fraud; but as it was solemnly sworn to before God, he punished the breach of it; and where murder is added to perjury, it is peculiarly abominable in his sight. Those who thus profane his name, and violate the most solemn engagements, shall not be held guiltless; but peculiar marks of divine displeasure shall be inflicted upon them. An inhabitant of Sion is faithful to his engagements; *though he swears to his own hurt, he changeth not.*

3. What is gotten by oppression and treachery does men no good, but, on the contrary, often brings evil on them and their posterity. The Israelites were glad to have the Gibeonites' land, and joined in the king's wicked designs. But famine overtook them there, and they smarted for their ill-gotten possession. God

will take the part of those who are oppressed, if restitution is not made. His vengeance will light upon those who enjoy what is wrongfully taken from others. Men's dishonest gains hurt their children, and bring ruin on their posterity. God hears the cry of the oppressed. But faithful and honest men enjoy what they have with comfort. *The just man walketh in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him.*

4. See the folly of strong men boasting in their strength. These men of great bulk and stature were overcome by men of the common size. They were an easier mark, and would soonest fall To glory in strength of body, is the glory of an horse or an ox. The glory of a man is wisdom, piety, righteousness, and self-government: if we are girded with these, they will be our ornament and strength, and *we shall be more than conquerors over our spiritual enemies, through Him that loved us.*

CHAPTER XXII.

This was probably at first only a form of private devotion, which David used after his victory and success; it was afterwards published, (see the eighteenth psalm throughout), to disperse more lively gratitude and true religion through his dominions.

1 AND David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day [that] the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: 2 And he said, The LORD [is] my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer; 3 The God of my rock; in him will I trust: [he is] my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. *By all these beautiful metaphors David expresses his firm dependance upon God and entire confidence in him.* 4 I will call on the LORD, [who is] worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 5 When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; 6 The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me; *he was like a man sinking, and ready to be overwhelmed; deadly snares and dangers surrounded him, nevertheless he did not despair, but hoped in God and prayed to him;* 7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God; and he

did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry [did enter] into his ears. 8 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth. 9 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it; *his hand was as remarkably apparent, as if he had actually destroyed his enemies by tempests, thunder and lightning.* 10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness [was] under his feet. 11 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind, *coming with speed and swiftness to my relief.* 12 And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, [and] thick clouds of the skies. 13 Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled. 14 The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice. 15 And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them; *immediately all his enemies were confounded and turned their backs.* 16 And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. 17 He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; 18 He delivered me from my strong enemy [and] from them that hated me; *from Goliath and the Philistines:* for they were too strong for me. 19 They prevented me in the day of my calamity; *Ahithophel did so by surprise:* but the LORD was my stay. 20 He brought me forth also into a large place, *a state of security and liberty:* he delivered me, because he delighted in me; *God delighted to make him king, and therefore carried him through all dangers to the crown.* 21 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. *He here describes his own integrity, that he intended no injury to Saul, no wrong to those who rebelled against him, and took no unlawful course to preserve himself.* 23 For all his judgments [were] before me: and [as for] his statutes, I did not depart from them; *he studied God's law as his rule.* 24 I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity; *especially from destroying Saul, to which he was often tempted, and with which he was charged.* 25 Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness, *hath favoured my righteous cause;* according to my cleanness in his eye-sight. 26 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, [and] with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright. 27 With the pure, thou wilt show

thyself pure, *he will be faithful to faithful souls:* and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavoury. 28 And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes [are] upon the haughty, [that] thou mayest bring [them] down; *cross their designs, and testify thine abhorrence of their practices.* 29 For thou [art] my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness, *restore me to prosperity and advance me to royal dignity, though poor and mean.* 30 For by thee I have run through a troop *of armed men:* by my God have I leaped over a wall, *scaled the cities and destroyed the fortifications of my enemies.* 31 [As for] God, his way [is] perfect; *his ways and methods of providence, though seemingly perplexed and dark, are perfectly just, and will appear so at last:* the word of the LORD [is] tried: he [is] a buckler to all them that trust in him, *good men have always found him faithful. Then, to illustrate this in his own case, he breaks out into the most thankful adoration.* 32 For who [is] God, save the LORD? *none of the idols of the heathen are gods:* and who [is] a rock, save our God? *none can defend his enemies, none can injure his friends.* 33 God [is] my strength [and] power: and he maketh my way perfect, *that is, plain, and removes all my difficulties.* 34 He maketh my feet like hinds' [feet,] *to pursue my enemies swiftly and successfully:* and setteth me upon my high places, *defends me against their attacks.* 35 He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms, *my strength and dexterity are from God.* 36 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great; *pardoned my sin, advanced me to this high station, and secured me in it.* 37 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip. 38 I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them; *particularly referring to Absalom's and Sheba's rebellion, which were so speedily and effectually crushed.* 39 And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet. 40 For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me. 41 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. 42 They looked, but [there was] none to save; [even] unto the LORD, but he answered them not. 43 Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, [and] did spread them abroad. 44 Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, *united Israel and*

Judah under me, thou hast kept me [to be] head of the heathen: a people [which] I knew not shall serve me; *he had subdued neighbouring nations, and extended his conquests to kingdoms remote and before unknown.* 45 Strangers shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me; *hearing the fame of his victorious arms, they should submit to him.* 46 Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places; *they shall be struck with panic, and distrusting their forces and strong holds, shall willingly become tributary to him. Thus he encourages himself to hope for future favours.* 47 The LORD liveth; and blessed [be] my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation: *he ascribes all to the power and goodness of God, and sums up the whole by saying,* 48 It [is] God that avengeth me *of all my enemies,* and that bringeth down the people under me, *maketh all Israel to submit to me,* 49 And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man, *from the Philistines, and his own subjects, and Saul.* 50 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name; *I will publish this song for the benefit of all my subjects, and to lead them to the knowledge of God.* 51 [He is] the tower of salvation for his king: and showeth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore; *he hoped and believed God would extend his favour to his posterity. Here seems a remote reference to the Messiah, to whom the fiftieth verse is applied,* Rom. xv. 9.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE general use of this chapter is to excite us to gratitude and praise for divine mercies, especially extraordinary interpositions of Providence in our favour. New mercies are every day rising, and call for new songs. Let us praise God in our secret devotions, and show forth his praises before others. We should not be ashamed to own our obligations to him, and to express our gratitude for his mercy. We should take notice of the greatness and seasonableness of our deliverances, and trace the hand of Providence in them, to make our gratitude lively and acceptable.

2. If we desire the continued favour and interposition of heaven, let us follow after righteousness. David was rewarded

according to it. This is a general maxim in divine proceedings. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright,* ver. 26. Thus we shall pray with humble hope and confidence. The more we are like God, the more fully we may be assured of his favourable regards.

3. Let us learn to trust God in future difficulties, and rejoice in him as an everliving and unchangeable God. *The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.* This is language well becoming christians, and should be their joy in every succeeding age. Whatever dangers or troubles are before us, he is still the same; therefore let him be trusted in, and exalted.

4. Let us especially rejoice to think that our deliverance is perfected in Christ. He hath raised us from the greatest trouble, the sorrows of death, the snares of hell; as the Captain of our salvation, he is gone before us, and will give us the victory over our spiritual enemies. If we fight under his banner, and depend on his grace, he will deliver us now; and at length bestow complete and everlasting salvation upon us.

CHAPTER XXIII.

An account of the last words of David, which were delivered by the spirit of prophecy; a catalogue of David's worthies, and the exploits of some of the most eminent of them.

1 NOW these [be] the last words of David *. David the son of Jesse said, and the man [who was] raised up on high, *exalted to be king of Israel, and* the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel †, said, 2 The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his [word] was in my tongue. *He here cele-*

* The last words of eminent saints and heroes deserve particular notice. But these are peculiarly worthy of attention, as they are introduced in so magnificent and awful a manner, immediately before his death, when the prophetic spirit was strong upon him, as it was upon Moses and Jacob in like circumstances.

† This title peculiarly belonged to David, as he was the author of most of the psalms, a composer of the music, and prescribed to the performers their several parts. He invented the instruments that accompanied them, and bore himself a part in the performance.

brates the author of his inspiration, Jehovah the God of Israel and takes notice of his powerful impulse. In the following verse we have the prophecy itself, which refers to the Messiah, his spiritual kingdom, and his final triumph over the enemies of it. After this magnificent introduction, he breaks out into a kind of transport of joy and expectation at the prospect before him. 3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men [must be] just, ruling in the fear of God, *or, as it should be rendered, The just one ruling over men, he ruleth in the fear of God.* 4 And [he shall be] as the light of the morning, [when] the sun riseth, [even] a morning without clouds; [as] the tender grass [springing] out of the earth by clear shining after rain; *he describes the glorious effects of this dominion, light and knowledge shall spread abroad over the earth, and that consolation and peace, which deliverance from the dominion of sin and death shall produce*.* Although my house [be] not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant; *although the present situation of myself and family, and the people of God, fall so much short of this glorious character, yet such a time will come according to God's covenant, which is* ordered in all [things,] and sure; *which is laid in order as the word signifies, and well expresses the gradual display of that promise in successive revelations of it, and the orderly disposition of the several events preceding and preparatory to the final completion of it; and this he rejoiced in, saying,* for [this is] all my salvation, and all [my] desire; although he make [it] not to grow†. 6 But [the sons] of Belial [shall be] all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands; *they shall be like thorns or briers, too rough, too strong, to be touched with a common hand, that is, they shall not be overtaken with a light and ordinary vengeance;* 7 But the man [that] shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear, *that is, Christ the Messiah and prince, who shall come to execute vengeance upon them, shall be armed with the instruments of destruction,* and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the [same] place; *he shall utterly consume them‡.*

* These are not two images, but one, viz., the springing up of grass and flowers before the bright sunshine of the morning, after refreshing rains in the night; than which there is not in all nature a more cheering and delightful scene.

† This should be part of v. 6., where he gives a short but dreadful representation of the condition of the wicked, and the vengeance that awaits them.

‡ This is parallel to the second psalm, *he shall rule them or break them with a rod of iron;* he shall prove as a consuming fire to them, they shall be utterly burnt up. It expresses the certainty of the action, and that there is no possibility of

8 These [be] the names of the mighty men whom David had: the Tachmonite that sat in the seat *at the council of war*, chief among the captains, *the lieutenant-general;* the same [was] Adino the Eznite; [he lifted up his spear] against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time*. 9 And after him [was] Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, [one] of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines [that] were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: 10 He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword, *by reason of blood which clotted his hand:* and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil; *they that were fled* (ver. 9.) *returned, after he had done slaying the Philistines, not to fight, but only to take the spoil.* 11 And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, *or, for foraging*, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines. 12 But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines, *drove them back with great loss:* and the LORD wrought a great victory. 13 And three of the thirty chief, *or the three captains over the thirty*, went down, and came to David in the harvest time, *when it was very hot*, unto the cave of Adullam, (1 Sam. xxii. 21.), and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim, (2 Sam. v. 18.) 14 And David [was] then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines [was] then [in] Beth-lehem. 15 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which [is] by the gate! *not with any intent that they should go for it, he only expressed how glad he should be of a draught of that water, of which he was used to drink when a boy.* 16 And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that [was] by the gate, and took [it,] and brought [it] to David; *this they did without saying any thing to him. Perhaps their boldness terrified the Philistines, who stood astonished to see them:* nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD, *as a thank offering to God for delivering them.* 17 And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: [is not this] the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he

escaping. This seems to be the meaning and spirit of this beautiful and instructive prophecy, and thus it is parallel to Mal. iv. 1, 2., and is illustrated by it.

* He slew three hundred of them with his own hands, (1 Chron. xi. 11.), and so routed the rest, that they were slain by others of the army.

would not drink it; *he was sorry for his foolish wish, and that such brave men should be exposed to such imminent danger.* These things did these three mighty men *together. Then follows their single exploits.* 18 And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, [and] slew [them,] and had the name among three. 19 Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the [first] three *for strength and valour.* 20 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lion-like men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow*: 21 And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man, *of great strength, dexterity and stature:* and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand *like a weaver's beam* (1 Chron. xi. 23.); but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear. 22 These [things] did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. 23 He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the [first] three. And David set him over his guard. 24 Asahel the brother of Joab [was] one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem, 25 Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite, 26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, 27 Abiezer the Anethothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, 28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, 29 Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin, 30 Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, 31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, 32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan, 33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, 34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, 35 Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, 36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, 37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armourbearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah, 38 Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite, 39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all†.

* He probably retired into a cave to shelter himself in snowy weather, and there a lion attacked him, which, notwithstanding the disadvantage of the situation, and the fierceness of the beast, he slew.

† There is some difference between this list and that in Chronicles. Some were then dead, or had misbehaved, and so lost their rank; which accounts for the disagreement between them. Others might be added who behaved well afterwards, and distinguished themselves by some heroic actions.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We should rejoice in the character and office of the Messiah, as here pointed out, and that this prophecy is so far accomplished. God hath raised up a King, even this just One, who *ruleth in the fear of God; the Sun of righteousness hath risen upon us with healing under his wings*; and we enjoy plenty of spiritual blessings in him. Let us rejoice that he hath extended his kingdom so wide, and *shall reign till his enemies become his footstool.*

2. Let us rejoice in the security of this everlasting covenant. It is our comfort in life and death; it is not only a covenant of royalty, but of grace, even *the sure mercies of David.* It is everlasting in its contrivance and continuance; admirably adapted to promote the glory of God, and the holiness and happiness of souls. It is firmly established by the promise of a faithful God, and Jesus is the surety of it. *It is well ordered in all things and sure;* as *it is all our salvation,* let it be *all our desire;* let us seek a share in its blessings, and comply with its demands. Then *will this God be our God for ever and ever, and our guide even until death.*

3. Let the enemies of Christ and his kingdom dread the effects of his displeasure. Those sons of Belial who refuse his yoke, which is so easy, who oppose his interests, and will not submit to him, shall be entirely destroyed by that fire which is never quenched. Therefore *kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.*

4. Whatever valour, resolution and success any possess, all should be ascribed to God. So were the noble exploits of these brave men, *v.* 10—12, *and the Lord wrought a great victory,* though these men were instruments in obtaining it. The hand of God should be acknowledged in all the strength, courage, and skill of men. *Let not the strong man* therefore *glory in his strength, but let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.*

5. Did the three men here mentioned venture so boldly to serve David and their country? How bold and resolute should we be in the cause of Christ! He is the Captain of our salvation; and we should be resolute in opposing temptations, and attacking our spiritual enemies. How courageously should we appear on the Lord's side, in opposition to abounding vice and wickedness!

endeavouring by our example and influence, to stem the torrent, and prevent its increase. They observed the least hint of their prince's mind, and hazarded their lives to gratify it; so ambitious were they to please him. Let us thus attend to the orders of our Lord, and observe every intimation of his will; especially as he puts us upon no desperate service, and requires nothing but what is reasonable and fit to be done, what he will assist us in, and reward us for.

6. Good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ should be had in everlasting remembrance. This catalogue is written for the honour of these worthies, and to excite the emulation of others. Those that enlist under Christ's banner war a good warfare, and shall all be had in everlasting honour. Their names *are written in the Lamb's book of life;* and though different degrees of courage and zeal will have different degrees of honour, yet all shall be approved and rewarded, and their names mentioned with applause at the great deciding day. Having been *faithful to death, they shall receive a crown of life.* Let us then seek this honour; *fight the good fight of faith,* that we may *finish our course with joy, and be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

The sin of David in numbering the people; the judgment brought upon the kingdom; the plague is stayed upon David's repentance; and an altar is built to God in memory of the deliverance.

1 AND again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, Go, number Israel and Judah*. 2 For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which [was] with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan *in the north,* even to Beer-sheba *in the south,* and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. 3 And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people how many soever they be, an hundred-

* We read, in 1 Chron. xxi. 1., that Satan suggested this, and God permitted it, because his anger was kindled against Israel for their rebellion, their luxury, and their confidence in their numbers and strength; a thing too common in prosperous and peaceful kingdoms.

fold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see [it:] but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing, *as it will be chargeable, troublesome, and dangerous?* 4 Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host, *who joined with him in the remonstrance.* And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel, *not being willing to hazard his favour, by disputing or disobeying his orders.*

5 And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that [lieth] in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer: 6 Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon, 7 And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah [even] to Beer-sheba. 8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days*. 9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah [were] five hundred thousand men†.

10 And David's heart smote him, after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly‡. 11 For § when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, *his domestic prophet, who advised him in difficult cases,* saying, 12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three [things;] choose thee one of them, that I may [do it] unto thee. *This was an instance of the divine clemency, and designed to humble him the more, by showing how unbecoming his vanity and conceit*

* They went south-east, then by the east to the north, so on to the west, and then to the south: but they did not number all the people, Benjamin and the Levites were omitted.

† The difference between this account and that in 1 Chron. xxi. 5., is easily reconciled, by supposing that in one account the militia was reckoned, and not in the other, which makes their numbers nearly equal. The whole was a prodigious multitude for so small a tract of land to support.

‡ Perhaps David's sin lay in doing this without divine direction, or any important design, but from pride and vanity, and confidence in his numbers and strength. This may be the reason why the action is imputed to Satan, the father of pride. The people were also guilty in not paying half a shekel ransom for their lives, according to the law, Exodus xxx. 12.

§ This should be rendered *And*, for this was not the reason why David repented.

were, when he was so entirely under the divine power. 13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine* come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. 14 And David *made an heroic and religious reply, and* said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies [are] great; and let me not fall into the hand of man†.

15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the time appointed‡: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men. 16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD, *observing David and the people assembled for worship, and penitent before him,* repented him of the evil, *changed his way,* and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand§. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite. *The angel appeared like a man, with a drawn sword in his hand, to show that it was no natural calamity, but an extraordinary judgment. He stood before a threshing-place on mount Moriah, where Abraham stood to sacrifice Isaac, and where the temple was afterwards built.* 17 And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, *(not to the angel, but to the Lord,)* Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house. *He reflects like a good man on his*

* In *Chronicles* it is *three years' famine;* and that perhaps is the true reading according to the ancient version, as it corresponds to three months' flight and three days' pestilence. They were three great and sore judgments.

† Famine and pestilence were both immediately from God's hand; but as famine was from a natural cause, he seems to refer to pestilence. He desires not to fall into the hand of men; they were cruel, and would make no distinction between the good and bad; this would be more to the dishonour of God, and stain the glory of Israel. There was great charity, wisdom and goodness in David's answer. If he had chosen famine, or the sword, he would have chosen ill for his people, but well for himself. He was rich, and might have had relief in famine, while his subjects were starving. He might have had some strong hold or fortification, while they were exposed to all the horrors of war. He chose what an ancient writer calls 'an evil incident to kings and governors, as well as subjects;' no riches nor forces could secure against it.

‡ The word properly signifies, *an assembly,* or *sacred time;* probably the time of evening prayer.

§ By this it appears that the plague continued only about nine hours, such quick work do judgments make; while Joab was nine months in going through the land, the angel's sword in nine hours did such terrible execution.

own sin, and not on the people and their rebellion. His language expresses the greatest affection for them. He prays that the sin might rather be charged to him and his father's house, that is, his kindred, who probably, instead of dissuading him, encouraged him to do it.

18 And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. *He was afraid to go to Gibeon, where the tabernacle was, because of the plague, and of the angel destroying Jerusalem in the mean time; and God, in condescension to his fears, orders the sacrifice to be on the spot.* 19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. 20 And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground. 21 And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, to buy the threshing-floor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people. 22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what [seemeth] good unto him; behold, [here be] oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and [other] instruments of the oxen for wood; *dry wood, yokes, and threshing instruments, to make the fire with.* 23 All these [things] did Araunah, [as] a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee; *he should think himself sufficiently paid if God would accept the sacrifice.* 24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy [it] of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing; *that would be dishonourable to God, as if he was not worthy of the expense, and a disparagement to himself, as if he was unwilling.* So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver*. And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings *to implore mercy*, and peace offerings, *in thankfulness for the beginning of mercy.* So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel. *The angel put up his sword, and God sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, in token of his acceptance*, 1 Chron. xxi. 26.; *David probably composed the ninety-first psalm on this occasion.*

* Between five and six pounds; and for the whole spot whereon the temple was built, and the courts about it, six hundred shekels, as we read, 1 Chron. xxi. 25., about five hundred and fifty pounds; probably much more than it was worth; but he did it out of royal bounty, and to reward so generous a man.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We have here an awful instance of the mischievous consequences of pride. There was no real harm in numbering the people. It had been done by Moses, and by others after David's time. But the principle was vanity; he was proud of his forces, and *now trusted in an arm of flesh*, and God punished him for it by the loss of great numbers of them. Pride is always displeasing to God, and it is just in him to take away that which is the cause of our pride and boasting. It is lawful to take pleasure in our comforts and possessions; but if we are proud, and forget God, he will deprive us of them. *Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

2. See what an excellent thing it is to have a tender conscience, which will smite us when we do evil, and reclaim us when we go astray. The best may err: but if the heart is tender, we shall soon be recovered; not continue under the power of sin, but quickly tread back the unhappy steps we have taken. We here see that the eye of God discerns the heart. May we be cautious, and look well to our own. He does not so much consider the action, as the principle. *Keep thy heart* therefore *with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*

3. We learn the nature and genuine effects of repentance. It will lead persons to own their sin; that they have sinned greatly, and done foolishly, and to accuse themselves more than others. So David. *These sheep, what have they done? On me be the iniquity. Let these escape.* It will lead us to seek pardon, and to cry earnestly for it. Too many are ready to extenuate their sin, saying, It is but a little matter; and are ready to charge others as greater offenders, especially when public judgments are abroad. But humble hearts blame themselves most, and entreat mercy for themselves and others. The more they see of God's great mercy, especially in pardoning, the more they are humbled for sin and resolved against it.

4. Those who profess relation to God, should cultivate a generous spirit. This was remarkable both in the Jebusites and the Israelites. They strove who should excel, and it was a noble emulation. Araunah offered generously to the king, though he was able to pay. David determined not to take advantage of his

generosity, but to pay to its full value, and gave a good reason; *he would not offer to the Lord what cost him nothing.* There is no true religion in a niggardly, covetous breast. Most men are for a cheap religion; they do not care how little they give for God and his service, and are glad if it costs them nothing. But God requires and expects that we *honour him with our substance;* and that whatever we do in his service, it should be done generously, and proportionably to the greatness and goodness of that God whom we serve. This is the way to secure his blessing with what we have, and to be largely *recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Amen.*

THE

FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS,

CALLED BY THE SEVENTY

THE THIRD BOOK OF THE KINGS.

INTRODUCTION.

THESE two books of the Kings contain the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, from Solomon to the Babylonish captivity; including a space of near six hundred years: and were probably written by Ezra.

☞ It will be proper to read the twenty-second chapter of the first book of Chronicles before this, as it contains an account of what immediately followed when the plague was stayed, and the altar built, and which connects the story with this.

CHAPTER I.

Gives an account of David's infirmities in his advanced life; the attempt Adonijah made to be king; Nathan's contrivance to secure the settlement upon Solomon; his nomination by David, and advancement to the throne; and the happy consequence of this, in the confusion of Adonijah and his party.

1 NOW king David was old [and] stricken in years; *he was now seventy years of age, and worn out with the hardships of his youth, and his cares, fatigues, and troubles;* and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. 2 Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. 3 So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunamite, and brought her to the king. 4 And the damsel [was] very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not. 5 Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. *He took the advantage of his father's*

age and weakness, and used those popular methods which Absalom had done. What emboldened him to this was his father's indulgence. 6 And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also [was a] very goodly [man;] and [his mother] bare him after Absalom, *therefore he was next heir now Absalom was dead.* 7 And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped [him.] *The first was disaffected because Amasa had been put in his place; the latter probably because Zadok had more of the king's confidence than him.* 8 But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which [belonged] to David, *his heroes and faithful life-guards,* were not with Adonijah. 9 And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which [is] by En-rogel; and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants: *they pretended to offer a sacrifice, and to feast upon it, and none were to come but those who were invited.* 10 But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not. *His not inviting Solomon showed that he knew him to be his rival, and was acquainted with his designation to the throne.*

11 Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth [it] not? 12 Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon; *for Adonijah will not reckon himself safe while he lives.* 13 Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? 14 *And,* Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I will also come in after thee, and confirm thy words, *and quicken him to give immediate orders about the matter.* 15 And Bath-sheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king. 16 And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou? 17 And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, [saying,] Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne. 18 And now, behold,

Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest [it] not. *She does not accuse David of breaking his oath, but intimates that he was unacquainted with what Adonijah had done.* 19 And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle, and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. 20 And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel [are] upon thee, that thou shouldst tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. *The Israelites knowing him to be concerned for their welfare, and that he was a prophet, would expect him to name a successor, and thus prevent disturbances and rebellions.* 21 Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. *She hopes he would immediately interpose, otherwise she and her son would be considered and punished as traitors, for aiming at the kingdom.* 22 And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in, *who was always welcome to the king, and Bath-sheba withdrew.* 23 And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground, *he approached with reverence, though he was a prophet.* 24 And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne*? 25 For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah. *He adds more than Bath-sheba, namely, that they had actually proclaimed him king, without either consulting God or David about it.* 26 But me, [even] me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called, *knowing that we are men of fidelity, and that there was no influencing us.* 27 Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not showed [it] unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him†? 28 Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba. And she came

* Nathan knew it was not so, but thus he awakens and rouses the king, and illustrates Adonijah's presumption.

† In a matter of such importance, Nathan thought David would not act without his advice, or seeking counsel of God; especially as he was the messenger of the divine designation of Solomon; if David had received any fresh revelation himself, he thought he would tell him of it.

into the king's presence, and stood before the king. 29 And the king sware, and said, [As] the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress *, 30 Even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day. 31 Then Bath-sheba bowed with [her] face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever. *She never wished to see Solomon king while David could continue to be so.*

32 And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; *he knew these men would faithfully and resolutely execute his orders.* 33 And they came before the king. The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, *the king's valiant guards*, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon†: 34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon‡. 35 Then shall ye come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah. 36 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the king say so [too.] 37 As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David. *This was an honest, loyal wish; uttered with the air of a soldier and an Israelite.* 38 So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 39 And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, *to make the unction more sacred and solemn*, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon. 40 And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of

* He here makes a solemn appeal to God, and speaks with gratitude of his preserving goodness; and therefore he would not take his name in vain.

† This was a fountain near Jerusalem, but on the opposite side to that where Adonijah was gone.

‡ The Jewish writers say, that the king was not anointed but in cases where the younger was chosen instead of the elder, or the crown was transferred to another family; the priest was to anoint him, and the prophet to denounce the divine designation; both were to join, to give greater authority and solemnity to it; then they were to proclaim him king, and fix him upon David's throne.

them; *the people rejoiced greatly to see a king settled by David's appointment, hoping it would prevent all contests, and secure their public peace.*

41 And Adonijah and all the guests that [were] with him heard [it] as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore [is this] noise of the city being in an uproar? *because it was his business as captain of the host to suppress it.* 42 And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for thou [art] a valiant man, and bringest good tidings, *or, a virtuous man, and we may depend on what thou sayest.* 43 And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king. *Jonathan was witness of the whole transaction, and went with the rest to the palace, where he heard and saw what passed on the occasion.* 44 And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule: 45 And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This [is] the noise that ye have heard. 46 And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom. 47 And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, *to thank him for his care in appointing a successor, and so good a one,* saying God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne. And the king bowed himself upon the bed, *to thank them, and adore God for his great mercy.* 48 And also thus said the king, Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel, which hath given [one] to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing [it.] *He mentioned this as a peculiar circumstance of joy, that his eyes saw it, and that he was a witness to the affection and joy of his people.* 49 And all the guests that [were] with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. *They dispersed as soon as they could, that it might not be known that they were with Adonijah.* 50 And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar*. 51 And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the

* Though there was no express law, that those who fled to the altar should be secure, yet they generally presumed, that out of respect to that holy place, none would offer violence to those that were there.

altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to-day that he will not slay his servant with the sword, *and I will surrender myself.* 52 And Solomon said, If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die. 53 So king Solomon sent, *and Adonijah agreed to the conditions,* and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon; *owned him for his sovereign and swore allegiance to him;* and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house; *meddle no more with public affairs, but mind your own private concerns.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. From hence we may learn, that those parents, who are over indulgent to their children, make a rod for themselves. It was no wonder that Adonijah proved a traitor and a rebel, when his father spoiled him, never crossed his humour, let him follow his own inclinations, and have his own way, and thus brought this distress upon himself. Such conduct in parents is weakness in them, and real cruelty to their children; who, when they are indulged, and not restrained and kept under, grow like Adonijah, proud and ambitious, and so are ruined.

2. It becomes aged saints to recollect and own the goodness of God to them in their past lives, ver. 29. When David mentions the name of God, he adds, *who hath redeemed me out of all distress.* He owns God's goodness in bringing him through so many dangers and difficulties. *Days should speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom.* Aged saints should be witnesses for God, should testify of his goodness, and the experience they have had of his protection and care. It is an honour due to God; it will afford them comfort in future scenes, especially in death; and be an encouragement to the rising generation *to taste and see that the Lord is gracious.*

3. It is a great satisfaction to good men, when dying and quitting the world, to leave their families in prosperous and peaceable circumstances; especially to see them rising up in their stead active for the honour of God and the support of religion, v. 48. This is a reason why heads of families should be careful of their interest, especially of the welfare of their souls; and why young men should be sober-minded, that their parents may have comfort in them living and dying.

4. How much reason have we to rejoice in the exaltation of Christ the son of David, and in the establishment of his kingdom, and to dread the confusion and doom of his enemies. *God hath set his King on his holy hill.* Whatever attempts are made to dethrone him, or to destroy his kingdom, shall all be vain; and shall be turned to the confusion of their authors, as those of Adonijah and his party were. Men think by secret plots to undermine the cause of Christ, the Prince of peace, but God will discover them. He suffers them to lay their heads together, and feast themselves with the hopes of success; and when at the height of their joy, he confounds them, lays them open to the scorn of the world, and the anguish of their own guilty hearts. But all those who are faithful to Christ, shall find him *able to save to the uttermost*, and enjoy all the inestimable blessings of his administration. *Kiss the Son*, therefore, *lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.*

CHAPTER II.

In which are David's last instructions to Solomon; an account of David's death and Solomon's succession; and the deaths of Adonijah, Joab and Shimei.

1 NOW the days of David drew nigh that he should die; *every thing relating to the temple being settled, he found himself going off apace;* and he charged Solomon his son *to mind religion,* saying, 2 I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore *in the way of justice and righteousness;* and show thyself a man, *discreet and serious;* 3 And keep the charge of the LORD thy God to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper, *or do wisely,* in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself*: 4 That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, *which he promised me conditionally,* saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there

* This variety of expression denotes the regard he should have to all God's precepts, to every thing the law contained, which he was to read and transcribe with his own hand.

shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel. 5 Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, *his insolent, imperious behaviour to me*, [and] what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew *to satisfy his own ambition*, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that [was] about his loins, and in his shoes that [were] on his feet; *he was not ashamed to go to the army with their blood upon his apparel, as if it was his glory to have murdered them.* 6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace *. 7 But show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me, *laden with all manner of provision*, when I fled because of Absalom thy brother. 8 And, behold, [thou hast] with thee Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. *David, by reason of this oath, was under a personal obligation to Shimei; but Solomon was at full liberty to vindicate the majesty of kings, and avenge the horrible insult and malicious reproaches thrown upon his father; and he supposed that Shimei's turbulent spirit would soon furnish him with occasion for punishing him.* 9 Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou [art] a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood †. 10 So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David, *in Sion; and his tomb was made of such firm materials, or was so well guarded, that it continued above one thousand years, till after Christ's time.* *See* Acts ii. 29. 11 And the days that David reigned over Israel [were] forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem. 12 Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and

* David had never forgiven him for these crimes; he only wanted power to punish him, and thought his son would be unsafe while such a bold and imperious man was living, who had such interest with the soldiers.

† Dr. Kennicott observes, that it is not uncommon to omit the negative in the second part of a sentence, and to consider it as repeated when it has been once expressed, and is followed by the connecting particle. He produces instances from Isaiah xlii. 22. Bishop Lowth, also, Psalm i. 5. ix. 18. xxxviii. 1. lxxv. 5. Prov. xiv. 12. xxx. 3. He therefore concludes that this passage should be rendered, *but his hoar head bring thou* NOT *down to the grave with blood*; and it is plain Solomon understood it in this sense, for he did not kill Shimei for that offence, but confined him to a particular spot in Jerusalem for the remainder of his life.—ED.

his kingdom was established greatly; *he reigned with the universal consent and approbation of his people.*

13 And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? *She had some reason to distrust him, because by her means, as he thought, he had lost the kingdom.* And he said, Peaceably. 14 He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee, *I am come about particular business.* And she said, Say on. 15 And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine *by hereditary right,* and [that] all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD; *therefore he would not have her think that he had any ill designs, but was well satisfied with the divine designation.* 16 And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on. 17 And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife. *He thought he might lawfully marry her because she was still a virgin, though David's last wife in his old age.* 18 And Bath-sheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king; *not understanding his whole intention, she promised to use her interest with the king.* 19 Bath-sheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. 20 Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; [I pray thee,] say me not nay. And the king said unto her, *with the greatest respect,* Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay. 21 And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife. 22 And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also: for he [is] mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah*. 23 Then king Solomon sware by the LORD,

* When Solomon heard the request, he was a little provoked, for it was not a small petition; she might as well have asked the kingdom. He saw at once through Adonijah's design. It was high treason among the Jews to marry or debauch the king's widow; but by this means Adonijah thought to enlarge his interest, as she perhaps was allied to some great family, or might have considerable wealth left her by David. Solomon seems to have had secret intelligence that a plot was forming by Joab, Abiathar, and Adonijah, and that this was their scheme, and the first overt act of treason.—'The ancient versions and the Targum give a different sense to the latter clause of this verse, viz., *for he* (Adonijah) *is my elder brother, and he has for him* (already declared on his side) *both Abiathar and Joab.*' Dr. KENNICOTT.

saying, God do so to me, and more also, *let him do worse to me than I dare mention,* if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life. 24 Now therefore, [as] the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. 25 And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died.

26 And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields, *to thy estate in the country:* for thou [art] worthy of death*: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the LORD God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted. 27 So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh; *and thus was the prophecy in* 1 Sam. ii. 31. *accomplished.*

28 Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom; *he knew he was guilty of crimes worthy of death, especially in this last plot.* And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar *in Gibeon, hoping for security and pardon there, as Adonijah had.* 29 And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD; and, behold, [he is] by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him. 30 And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay, but I will die here; *perhaps intending to bring reproach on Solomon for staining the tabernacle with blood.* And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me. 31 And the king, *who was determined to show that no place, however sacred, should secure a murderer from justice, as the law appointed,* said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father, *and wipe off the reflection of having spared him, from David's character, and prevent the evil that might come upon his family for it.* 32 And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more

* Besides being concerned in this plot, he had taken part in Absalom's rebellion.

righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing [thereof, to wit,] Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. 33 Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD. 34 So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness; *he had an honourable burial suitable to his rank and character.* 35 And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host: and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar.

36 And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. 37 For it shall be, [that] on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head *. 38 And Shimei said unto the king, The saying [is] good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days. 39 And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish son of Maachah king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold thy servants [be] in Gath. 40 And Shimei, *thinking that Solomon had forgotten the injunction, or would not adhere strictly to it,* arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went *without asking leave of the king,* and brought his servants from Gath. 41 And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again. 42 And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word [that] I have heard [is] good. 43 Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? *He was doubly guilty, in disobeying the king, when put on his good behaviour, and of breaking a solemn oath.* 44 The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou

* Solomon, knowing Shimei to be a man of a turbulent spirit, confined him to Jerusalem and a mile about it, for so far Kidron was from it, that he might not have an opportunity to sow sedition among the tribes, and that his conduct might be narrowly watched.

knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father; *upon what wicked and malicious principles he had cursed his father:* therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head. 45 And king Solomon [shall be blessed,] and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever; *the Lord had turned Shimei's curses into a blessing.* 46 So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died *. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon, *by the removal of those wicked and turbulent men.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE see, that the greatest and best of men *go the way of all the earth.* Neither wealth, nor power, nor piety, shield from death. *It is appointed unto all men,* and it becomes us seriously to think of it, and be prepared for this awful journey. There are but two different ways after death, to heaven or hell.

2. Good men cannot spend their dying breath better, than in giving a solemn charge to their children. Parents should be solicitous to do it then, when their words will make a peculiar impression, and when children will be more likely to attend to them and keep their charge, and the charge of God, as the only way to prosperity for both worlds. If we keep God's charge, we may hope he will continue his mercies to us, as to our fathers, and perform all his promises, *on which he hath caused us to hope.*

3. Observe the just and righteous judgments of God upon cruel and ambitious men. Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei did not take warning, but proceeded in their aspiring designs, till they came to a shameful end. A little contentment, meekness, and humility, had saved their lives. They might have lived easy and happy, and died in peace. But the justice of God and Solomon overtook them, and returned their violent doings on their own heads. In the lowest stations of life if men would live easy and comfortable, the way is very plain, that is, to be contented and humble. *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

4. A grateful sense of kindnesses received should never be lost. We should return it while we live, and be desirous that our children should return it to our benefactors, or to their offspring.

* Executions were not then done by an officer appointed for the purpose, but by some great men about the court, as here by the greatest officer in the army.

Thus David requited Barzillai's kindness. It is a wise and useful maxim of Solomon, *Thine own friend and thy father's friend forget not.*

CHAPTER III.

Gives a general account of Solomon's marriage and religion; his prayer, and God's gracious answer to it; and his wise decision of a difficult case.

1 AND Solomon, *to fix himself more strongly in his government,* made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter *to wife**, and *Solomon* brought her into the city of David, *(here she dwelt till he built a house for her)*, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.

2 Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days; *there was no fault in the worship, but in the place. It was a patriarchal custom, but not so much regarded now, for those high places had been abused by idolatry.* 3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burned incense in high places, *which David his father had not done.* 4 And the king went to Gibeon, *where the tabernacle was,* to sacrifice there; for that [was] the great high place, *the chief resort for people to worship:* a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar, *the brazen altar of Moses. He went there with the nobles and great men to worship, and thank God for his peaceable settlement on the throne.*

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; *in that night after he had offered up his sacrifices:* and God, *to try his inclination,* said, Ask what I shall give thee†. 6 And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and

* It is probable she was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and therefore the marriage was not sinful; for no mention is made of the gods of Egypt among those by whom Solomon was seduced. *See* chap. ix., and this is confirmed by the forty-fifth psalm.

† This gracious offer had no doubt been the subject of his daily prayer, and of his most serious thoughts; and therefore he immediately offers this excellent prayer, which he begins with a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies he had received.

thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as [it is] this day. 7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not [how] to go out or come in. *He acknowledges his ignorance and weakness; he was now about twenty years old, and but a little child with respect to skill about public affairs. He knew not how to rule and behave wisely for want of experience.* 8 And thy servant [is] in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude; *they were God's chosen people, therefore he would expect peculiar care to be taken of them, and they were a great people, consequently great abilities were required to rule them.* 9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad, *have wisdom to behave suitable to my station and the services I am to be employed in:* for who is able to judge this thy so great a people, *without divine assistance and guidance?* 10 And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing; *it was a token of a virtuous mind and a public spirit, of concern for the glory of God, and the good of Israel.* 11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself *those things that men are generally fond of,* long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. *God immediately granted his request, infused into his mind more sagacity and wisdom than he would naturally have had, and such as was superior to all others.* 13 And I have also given thee, *as a token of my particular favour and my approbation of this prayer,* that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days; *thou shalt excel all the kings of the earth in riches and renown.* 14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days*. 15 And Solomon awoke; and, behold, [it was] a dream. *He understood and heard*

* Lest his great wisdom should make him proud, careless, and presumptuous, God only makes a conditional promise as to the length of his days, but the other were given absolutely and immediately.

it as distinctly as if he had been awake; nor did he know till he awoke, that it was a dream. By this God signified to him the acceptance of his daily prayers, and Solomon knew he intended to convince him of his favour and acceptance. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, *to thank God for this exceeding great favour,* and offered up burnt offerings and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants, *the nobles and officers feasted on the peace offerings.*

16 Then came there two women, [that were] harlots, *or innkeepers, the word signifies both,* unto the king, and stood before him *to plead their own cause; probably the cause had been brought before to some inferior court, who had been puzzled with it, and therefore it was now brought to the king.* 17 And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. 18 And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we [were] together; [there was] no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. 19 And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. 20 And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom; *fearing the disgrace of overlaying her child, she stole mine from me.* 21 And when I arose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, *when it was perfect day-light,* behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. 22 And the other woman said, Nay; but the living [is] my son, and the dead [is] thy son. And this said, No; but the dead [is] thy son, and the living [is] my son. Thus they spake before the king, *the one affirming and the other denying it. It was a difficult case; the children were much of the same age, there was no witness, one of the mothers acknowledged she was asleep, and the reputation of both was much alike.* 23 Then said the king, The one saith, This [is] my son that liveth, and thy son [is] the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son [is] the dead, and my son [is] the living; *we must therefore try some other method to decide the controversy.* 24 And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. 25 And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. *He knew this was the best way to end the dispute, for, whichever the real mother was, her affections would work so strongly as not to suffer the child to be*

divided; thus nature unravelled what reason could not. 26 Then spake the woman whose the living child [was] unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, [but] divide [it.] *The true mother would rather part with the child than have it destroyed; the other having no love to the child, but envying her companion the possession of what she had lost, made her at first steal the child and now willing to have it slain.* 27 Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she [is] the mother thereof. *It appeared by her love and pity that she was not the careless mother of the smothered child, but the real mother of the living one, who could not bear to see it slain.* 28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God [was] in him, to do judgment. *This great sagacity, and wise determination, raised his reputation, and promoted among all the people a reverence for him.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. The experience our fathers have had of the mercy and kindness of God, should encourage us to pray and hope, *v.* 6. Children may plead their parents' piety, and God's many favours to them, and hope the same may be shown them, while they are careful to tread in their steps.

2. The great subject of our prayers should be *a wise and an understanding heart,* to know our duty in every circumstance; to see the good and the bad, that we may pursue the one and avoid the other, and judge right of other men's actions and our own. Let young people pray for this, and pray for it with earnestness. Youth are raw, ignorant, and inexperienced, and need divine teaching. They should therefore plead with God, saying, *Truly I am thy servant, give me an understanding heart, that I may discern between good and bad.*

3. God is greatly pleased with the devotions of young people, especially when they fix their hearts upon wisdom and piety. He loves to see them sensible of their ignorance and danger, and the difficulties of their station, and desirous to learn and practise their duty; and he will grant them their request. *I love them that love me, and they who seek me early shall find me.* We learn,

4. That spiritual blessings should be sought with the greatest

importunity, and temporal ones submitted to divine choice; this is the way to succeed in both. God allows us to be earnest for spiritual ones, but we should be indifferent to temporal ones; preferring wisdom to gold, and grace to worldly honour. Wisdom is good with an inheritance; without wisdom, an inheritance is good for nothing. *Godliness has the promise of this life, and that which is to come.* It is perhaps with reference to this our Lord gives that advice, *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.*

5. The story of the harlots may suggest some useful reflections to parents. These women, bad as their characters were, nursed their own children; 'while, (as Bp. Hall says,) some that pretend to religion have put off nature, the primary and unalterable law of God, and committed their children to hirelings.' They may learn to be careful of their children's lives, as they are so tender, and so easily destroyed; and let parents show their love to their children by taking care of them themselves, especially by taking care of their souls. Those who thus do their duty to their children in both respects, are most likely to have comfort in them.

CHAPTER IV.

An account of Solomon's grandeur, magnificence, and wisdom; the extent of his dominions, and the happiness of his subjects.

1 SO king Solomon was king over all Israel; *his successors were only over part of it.* 2 And these [were] the princes, *or great officers,* which he had; Azariah the son of Zadok the priest, *or the chief officer.* 3 Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha, scribes, *or secretaries of state;* Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud the recorder, *who presented petitions to the king, and registered public affairs;* 4 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [was] over the host: and Zadok and Abiathar [were] the priests: *Abiathar still retained the title of priest, and perhaps performed some offices, though Zadok was the chief.* 5 And Azariah the son of Nathan [was] over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan [was] principal officer, [and] the king's friend; *he was president of the council, or chancellor, and particularly intimate with the king. Solomon had a great regard for these sons of Nathan for their father's sake.*

6 And Ahishar [was] over the household, *or lord chamberlain:* and Adoniram the son of Abda [was] over the tribute, *receiver of the revenues, or the levy of men*.*

7 And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, *in different parts of the land,* which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision†. 8 And these [are] their names: the son of Hur, in mount Ephraim: 9 The son of Dekar, in Makaz, and in Shaalbim, and Beth-shemesh, and Elon-beth-hanan: 10 The son of Hesed, in Aruboth; to him [pertained] Socho, and all the land of Hepher: 11 The son of Abinadab, in all the region of Dor; which had Taphath the daughter of Solomon to wife: 12 Baana the son of Ahilud; [to him pertained] Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which [is] by Zartanah beneath Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, [even] unto [the place that is] beyond Jokneam: 13 The son of Geber, in Ramoth-gilead; to him [pertained] the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which [are] in Gilead; to him [also pertained] the region of Argob, which [is] in Bashan, threescore great cities with walls and brasen bars: 14 Ahinadab the son of Iddo [had] Mahanaim: 15 Ahimaaz [was] in Naphtali; he also took Basmath the daughter of Solomon to wife: 16 Baanah the son of Hushai [was] in Asher and in Aloth: 17 Jehoshaphat the son of Parnah, in Issachar: 18 Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin: 19 Geber the son of Uri [was] in the country of Gilead, [in] the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan; and [he was] the only officer which [was] in the land, *in that part of the land which lay eastward.*

20 Judah and Israel [were] many, as the sand which [is] by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry, *were in perfect security and had every thing in plenty; they were highly pleased with the king, and all those wise contrivances for the prosperity of the nation.* 21 And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river *Euphrates in the east,* unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life, *were in subjection to him, and paid him tribute.*

* Several of these were men of approved wisdom and fidelity, and were employed under David.

† This was a wise appointment, as provisions were furnished at the best hand, and all parts of the kingdom were equally benefited; their products consumed, and the money circulated through them.

22 And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, *about three hundred measures of fine flour, and six hundred coarser for the soldiers and guards.* 23 Ten fat oxen *from the stall,* and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, besides harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl. 24 For he had dominion over all [the region] on this side the river, from Tipshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him, *so that commerce was open to every place.* 25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree*, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon.

26 And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots†, and twelve thousand horsemen *dispersed through the several tribes, to keep peace and be ready in case of an attack.* 27 And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing. 28 Barley also, *which was anciently the food for horses,* and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where [the officers] were, *or rather, where the beasts were; the word officers is not in the original;* every man according to his charge.

29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, *a most comprehensive knowledge of all things, both divine and human, and a readiness to communicate his knowledge to others,* even as the sand that [is] on the sea shore. *This was more his glory, than all his wealth and splendour.* 30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. *He was wiser than the Arabians or the Egyptians, who were famous for philosophy, astronomy, and other sciences, and into which country the Grecian philosophers travelled to get wisdom and knowledge.* 31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about‡. 32 And he spake three thousand proverbs, *short, useful sentences, and those about*

* These trees were plentiful in Canaan, and valuable both for their fruit and shade, under which they sat enjoying the fruits of their labour. The expression denotes both their plenty and security; they were in no danger from enemies.

† In 2 Chron. ix. 25., they are called four thousand; probably there were ten horses to a stall or stable.

‡ The two first named of these were eminent men, the eighty-eighth and eighty-ninth psalms were composed by them.

him wrote them down: he was an excellent moral philosopher: and his songs were a thousand and five*. 33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that [is] in Lebanon even unto the hyssop, *or moss,* that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes; *he was acquainted with natural history and botany, from the greatest to the least vegetable production.* 34 And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom; *the kings of the earth sent some of their wise men to hear his wisdom and learn of him.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. PRINCES, and great and wealthy men, may learn hence how to employ their riches, and contrive how to add dignity and lustre to their greatness. Let them keep plentiful tables for the benefit of their subjects, their neighbours, and strangers; manage with prudence and economy, and guide their affairs with discretion. Above all, let them labour to furnish their minds with useful knowledge, and enlarge their hearts with wisdom. Thus will they appear worthy their splendour; will secure their reputation, and be a blessing to mankind.

2. See the wisdom of Providence in giving Solomon so much wealth, wisdom, and influence, which raised the glory of Israel so high, and made them appear great in the eyes of the nations about them. When they had such a prince at their head, strangers would naturally inquire into their religion and laws; especially those, who, as in the last verse, were sent on purpose to inquire. Thus some knowledge of the living God and true religion, would be diffused through the nations, and a way made for multitudes to become proselytes to the Jewish church.

3. We see that neither the greatest wealth, nor the greatest wisdom, can always secure men from folly and vice, for we find afterwards that Solomon apostatized. This should prevent our confidence in any thing that is great, and our trusting to our wisdom, skill or discretion. Wealth well employed is good; learning and wisdom very good; but religion is every thing; and those

* This was the ancient way of instructing, and of recording facts. But these were probably not so well adapted to stir up a spirit of piety and devotion, as David's were. He was *the sweet psalmist of Israel.* We have one of Solomon's on record, which shows a fine genius, and a noble imagination.

that desire to be eminent for that, should be very humble and very cautious. We reflect,

4. How well qualified Solomon was to judge wherein true happiness consisted. Of all men living he had the greatest advantages for knowing what wealth, and all that could be procured by it, what splendour, honour, or reputation can do; yea, what knowledge can do, towards making men happy. His reflection on this, in the book of *Ecclesiastes* is, that *all is vanity and vexation of spirit*. Let us then, when we read of his greatness and his wisdom, remember what he has taught us of their vanity, and hear what he justly observes is the natural conclusion of the whole matter; *fear God, and keep his commandments, for that is the whole of man.*

CHAPTER V.

Contains articles of agreement between Solomon and Hiram, and the fulfilling of them.

1 AND Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon, *to condole with him on David's death, and congratulate him on his succession;* for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father; for Hiram was ever a lover of David, *and therefore was desirous of continuing a friendship with his son.* 2 And Solomon sent to Hiram, *to remind him of what he had been before informed of,* saying, 3 Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God, for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them, *his enemies,* under the soles of his feet, *made them subject to him.* 4 But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, [so that there is] neither adversary nor evil occurrent, *nothing to make me fear any disturbances.* 5 And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, *for his honour and worship,* as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name*. 6 Now therefore command thou that they hew me

* In 2 Chron. ii. there is a larger account of this message. It was to be *a great house, for great is our God above all gods.* He would not have Hiram think God

cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants, *to assist them and learn of them:* and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that [there is] not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians *.

7 And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, *and paid him a great compliment, saying,* (2 Chron. ii. 11.), *because the Lord loveth his people, he hath made thee king over them;* and *he* said *also,* Blessed [be] the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people†. 8 And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for, *and agree to the proposals:* [and] I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. 9 My servants shall bring [them] down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats, unto the place that thou shalt appoint me‡, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive [them:] and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household§. 10 So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees, and fir trees [according to] all his desire. 11 And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat [for] food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil, *which was used as we do butter*‖: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year. 12 And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him, *and which eminently appeared in this transaction:* and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together, *a treaty of peace and alliance was concluded between them.*

13 And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the

was a local deity, and confined to a temple. In that chapter he asserts his universal presence, and declares that this house was only intended as a place for his servants to assemble in, and for the priests to sacrifice and burn incense.

* The Sidonians and Tyrians were neighbours, under one king. They were celebrated among the ancients for their skill in architecture and curious work. In 2 Chron. ii., Solomon desires Hiram to send a man skilful in working gold, silver, brass, iron, &c.

† He seems not to have been an idolater, but a worshipper of Jehovah, as he mentions his name with great reverence.

‡ This was at Joppa, a seaport in Israel.

§ They were in want of corn, of which there was plenty in Israel, and were supplied in general from thence, Acts xii. 20. We find, in 2 Chronicles ii. 14., that he, that is, Hiram, sent also a skilful man, who was employed by his father to superintend all the curious work.

‖ There is some difference in the account given in Chronicles. So much was allowed for workmen, and so much for Hiram's own use; barley and wine are added there.

levy was thirty thousand men. 14 And he sent them to Lebanon, *with the Tyrians, to hew and square the wood,* ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, [and] two months at home; *that they might not be tired of the work, or entirely neglect their family affairs:* and Adoniram [was] over the levy, *to raise them, and see them disposed according to order.* 15 And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, *were porters,* and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains; *all these were strangers, remnants of the Canaanites; they were tributary, and had forsaken idolatry;* 16 Besides the chief of Solomon's officers which [were] over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work, *besides three hundred more for a reserve in case of sickness, or the like,* 2 Chron. ii. 2*. 17 And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, [and] hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. 18 And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew [them,] and the stone squarers, *or Giblites, as* Ezek. xxvii. 9., *that is, the inhabitants of Gebel, see* Joshua xiii. 5.; *these and all the Phœnicians were curious artists:* so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

REFLECTIONS.

1. TIMES of peace and rest ought to be employed for the service of God, and the edification of his church, *v.* 4. When there is no foreign adversary to disturb our repose, no evil occurrence at home to call off our minds, we should be peculiarly active and forward in the Lord's work. *Then had the churches rest, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.* Acts ix. 31.

2. It is a great comfort to all who love the Israel of God, to see religion supported and maintained in families which have been eminent for it. In this Hiram rejoiced. The greater love he had to David, the greater was his joy for his son's wisdom and goodness. Young people should be careful not to lose the entail of religion, or deviate from the steps of pious ancestors: their piety

* These were principal officers, who surveyed the whole. There was a prodigious number of men employed, but it should be remembered, there was not only the temple, but other buildings and several palaces, 1 Kings ix. 15. Besides, they had not such convenient methods of carrying as we have, therefore multitudes were employed in drawing timber and stones to the sea, and from Joppa to Jerusalem.

and perseverance will give joy to all that love God, and wish well to the support of religion.

3. The wisdom and goodness of God is to be observed in the various products of different climates, and the different genius of the inhabitants. The Tyrians and Sidonians were famous for mechanic arts, architecture, all masonry and carpentry work, and curious devices. The Israelites were famous for agriculture. Canaan was a fruitful land; Tyre was like Holland, they had little product of their own, but were all tradesmen and merchantmen. Canaan and Tyre depended on each other in a great measure; and in this appears the wisdom of God to promote traffic and commerce, to diffuse the conveniences of life, and spread knowledge and virtue from one place to another. *He fixes the bounds of men's habitations,* and gives them all their capacity and skill.

4. Mutual good offices between neighbours is very desirable and becoming. How beautiful and lovely is it to see these two princes ready to serve each other with the products of their respective countries! Thus should we act to those about us; be kind and friendly to them, ready to sell, or lend, or give, what we have, and which they want. This is the way to receive other favours in exchange, and to promote the peace and honour of society, and the comfort of one another. We have likewise, in *v.* 9., a good maxim for tradesmen; and from hence we learn,

5. That it is the wisdom of those who have dealings with each other, to be punctual and exact in bargains and agreements. Solomon spoke of hewing trees, and Hiram agreed to it; but nothing had been said about carriage, where the goods were to be put on board, and where landed, and at whose expense the carriage was to be. Hiram very wisely mentioned this in his articles, that there might be no misunderstanding afterwards. It is an important lesson of wisdom to know what we are to expect from others; to have it settled before we begin. For want of this, differences often arise, are long continued, and sometimes separate even chief friends. Men's tempers and views may change, and their lives are uncertain; therefore exact, punctual, written agreements, with regard to what is only contingent, are very proper, and the best way to secure friendship and establish peace.

6. Let us long for that happy time, when Jews and Gentiles, and all the different nations, shall join together to build up God's spiritual temple, and establish his religion on the earth. Hiram, strangers and Israelites, all joined in the work. The glory of the

latter day is foretold by an image borrowed from this story, Isaiah lx. 10—13. *And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.* Such a time we have the highest assurances of; let us wish for its approach; and in the mean time contribute all in our power to serve the interests of true religion, which will be the most substantial proof of our wisdom and piety.

CHAPTER VI.

The building of the temple. There is such a reference to this in other parts of the Bible that a few general remarks may be useful.

1 AND it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which [is] the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD*. 2 And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the length thereof [was] threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty [cubits,] and the height thereof thirty cubits; *exactly as large again as the tabernacle.* 3 And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits [was] the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; [and] ten cubits [was] the breadth thereof before the house†.

4 And from the house he made windows of narrow lights; *narrow on the outside, but growing wider within.* 5 And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about, [against] the walls of the house round about, [both] of the temple, and of

* The place was mount Moriah, probably Haran's threshing-floor. The time was four hundred and eighty years after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and about one thousand years before Christ. Solomon was four years in settling the kingdom, and preparing materials, before he began to build upon the plan which God gave to David by his Spirit.

† In Chronicles we find it was one hundred and twenty cubits in height, that is, four times as high as the body of the temple.

the oracle: and he made chambers round about: 6 The nethermost chamber [was] five cubits broad, and the middle [was] six cubits broad, and the third [was] seven cubits broad: for without [in the wall] of the house he made narrowed rests round about, that [the beams] should not be fastened in the walls of the house*. 7 And the house when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax [nor] any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building; *they were so well fitted to one another before they were brought there, that they had nothing to do but put them together.* 8 The door for the middle chamber [was] in the right side of the house: and they went up with winding stairs into the middle [chamber,] and out of the middle into the third. 9 So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar; *it had a vaulted roof, to make it look more grand, and the boards were covered with some metal, perhaps silver.* 10 And then he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house with timber of cedar.

Here, lest Solomon should think the house was so firm that it would never be destroyed, and that when God had taken possession of it he would never forsake his people, he is reminded that the promise was only conditional. 11 And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, 12 [Concerning] this house which thou art in building, If thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father (2 Sam. vii. 13., 1 Chron. xxii. 10.): 13 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel. *He here intimates to Solomon, that if he was not determined to obey his laws, he had better not proceed; for let him build ever so strong, it would be demolished if he was disobedient. The building of the temple would never excuse him or the people, if they were rebellious.*

14 So Solomon built the house, and finished it; *which is an intimation of his determination to observe the law of God.* 15 And he built, *or wainscoted,* the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house, and the walls of the ceiling,

* The chambers round about were three stories high, the narrow windows of the temple were above the top of them. These chambers went gradually broader towards the top, because the walls of the temple were thicker at the bottom. There was a buttress five cubits high, on which the beams for the first chambers were laid, and so on to the top. These chambers were for provision, frankincense and lodgings for the priests.

or from the floor of the house unto the walls: [and] he covered [them] on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir, *that is, the most holy place, properly called the house, because there the divine glory resided, and the answers were given from thence.* 16 And he built twenty cubits on the sides of the house, both the floor and the walls with boards of cedar: he even built [them] for it within, [even] for the oracle, [even] for the most holy [place.] 17 And the house, that [is,] the temple before it, was forty cubits [long.] 18 And the cedar of the house within [was] carved with knops and open flowers: all [was] cedar; there was no stone seen.

19 And the oracle he prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. 20 And the oracle in the forepart [was] twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof: and he overlaid it with pure gold *beaten into plates;* and [so] covered the altar [which was of] cedar, *that is, the altar of incense was also covered with plates of gold, therefore called the golden altar,* chap. vii. 48. 21 So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold; *he made a partition between the holy and most holy place, in the middle of which there was a door, and over which a veil or curtain was hung by chains of gold.* 22 And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house; also the whole altar *of incense* that [was] by the oracle he overlaid with gold.

23 And within the oracle he made two cherubims [of] olive tree, [each] ten cubits high. 24 And five cubits [was] the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other [were] ten cubits. 25 And the other cherub [was] ten cubits: both the cherubims [were] of one measure and one size. 26 The height of the one cherub [was] ten cubits, and so [was it] of the other cherub. 27 And he set the cherubims within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims, so that the wing of the one touched the [one] wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house. 28 And he overlaid the cherubims with gold*. 29 And he

* There were also two on the mercy-seat over the ark of massy gold, but these were much larger; what their shape was is uncertain; some think it was human, others that they were winged oxen, to denote strength and dignity. It is ob-

carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims * and palm trees and open flowers, within and without, *denoting that plenty which God would bestow upon them if obedient.* 30 And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold, within and without.

31 And for the entering of the oracle he made doors [of] olive tree: the lintel [and] side posts [were] a fifth part [of the wall,] *a fifth part of the whole height.* 32 The two doors also [were of] olive tree: and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid [them] with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims, and upon the palm trees. 33 So also made he for the door of the temple posts [of] olive tree, a fourth part [of the wall.] 34 And the two doors [were of] fir tree: the two leaves of the one door [were] folding, and the two leaves of the other door [were] folding. 35 And he carved [thereon] cherubims and palm trees and open flowers: and covered [them] with gold fitted upon the carved work.

36 And he built the inner court with three rows of hewed stone, and a row of cedar beams †.

37 In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the LORD laid, in the month Zif: 38 And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which [is] the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years *and some little more* in building it.

REFLECTION.

THERE is room for a fertile fancy to spiritualize every thing in this chapter. But it is better to forbear it, for fear of dishonouring the scripture, and substituting fanciful allusions for divine truths. It is sufficient in general to observe, that every thing here is suited to give us grand ideas of God's worship, and to excite reverence and seriousness in the worshippers. In particular the most holy place, the angels drawn about it, &c. We have none of this pomp and splendour to engage our attention;

servable, their faces were turned inwards; consequently they stood as worshippers, and were not therefore the objects of worship.

* Probably the design of this was, to remind the Jews of the presence of angels in their sacred places, who observed their devotions.

† This was a wall that separated the court of the priests from the people; it was three cubits high, that the people might see over it what the priests were doing.

but we have brighter discoveries of the nature and excellencies of God to assist our devotion: *God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*; and then the worship will be acceptable wherever it is performed.

CHAPTER VII.

A further account of Solomon's buildings, and the furniture of the temple.

1 BUT Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house; *he did not begin his own house till he had finished the temple, that nothing might interfere with that.* 2 He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon*; the length thereof [was] a hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars. 3 And [it was] covered with cedar above upon the beams, that [lay] on forty-five pillars, fifteen [in] a row. 4 And [there were] windows [in] three rows, and light [was] against light [in] three ranks. 5 And all the doors and posts [were] square, with the windows: and light [was] against light [in] three ranks. 6 And he made a porch of pillars, *a portico, or piazza, for his guards who attended him to be under cover; it seems probable that this was at his palace at Jerusalem*; the length thereof [was] fifty cubits, and the breadth thereof thirty cubits: and the porch [was] before them: and the [other] pillars and the thick beam [were] before them. 7 Then he made a porch for the throne where he might judge, [even] the porch of judgment, *where he was to hear and determine causes:* and [it was] covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other. 8 And his house where he dwelt [had] another court within the porch, [which] was of the like work; *this was another building, adjoining the queen's palace.* Solomon made also an house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken [to wife,] like unto this porch. *It was customary in the east for the women and men to*

* Some suppose this was a country-seat in Lebanon; but I rather think it was near Jerusalem, and so called because it was principally built of the cedars of Lebanon. In 2 Chron. ix. 16. we find that he put the golden shields there, which in his son's time the king of Egypt took away when he came against Jerusalem. It was probably a magazine for arms.

have separate apartments. 9 All these [were of] costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and [so] on the outside toward the great court. 10 And the foundation [was of] costly stones, [even] great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits, *very large and valuable.* 11 And above [were] costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones, and cedars. 12 And the great court round about [was] with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the LORD, and for the porch of the house.

13 And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram * out of Tyre. 14 He [was] a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father [was] a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work. *He was a man of extraordinary skill, and gave him remarkable assistance in these great works.* 15 For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about. *They were two yards in diameter, and had beautiful ornaments about them.* 16 And he made two chapiters [of] molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars: the height of the one chapiter [was] five cubits, and the height of the other chapiter [was] five cubits: 17 [And] nets of checker work, and wreaths of chain work, for the chapiters which [were] upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapiter, and seven for the other chapiter. 18 And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one network, to cover the chapiters that [were] upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapiter. 19 And the chapiters that [were] upon the top of the pillars, [were] of lily work in the porch, four cubits. 20 And the chapiters upon the two pillars [had pomegranates] also above, over against the belly which [was] by the net work: and the pomegranates [were] two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapiter. 21 And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin, *that is, he shall establish:* and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz, *that is, in it is strength* †.

* In 2 Chron. iv. 11. he is called *Huram.*

† These were not to support any of the building, but were designed for ornaments, and to be significant mementos to the worshippers to look to God for assistance and strength; and were also an expression of Solomon's expectations that God would strengthen his people, and establish the temple.

22 And upon the top of the pillars [was] lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished.

23 And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: [it was] round all about, and his height [was] five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. 24 And under the brim of it round about [there were] knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about: the knops [were] cast in two rows, when it was cast. 25 It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea [was set] above upon them, and all their hinder parts [were] inward. 26 And it was an hand breadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies: it contained two thousand baths*.

27 And he made ten bases, *or stands*, of brass, *with wheels, for the convenience of moving it from place to place;* four cubits [was] the length of one base, and four cubits the breadth thereof, and three cubits the height of it. 28 And the work of the bases [was] on this [manner:] they had borders, and the borders [were] between the ledges: 29 And on the borders that [were] between the ledges [were] lions, oxen, and cherubims: and upon the ledges [there was] a base above: and beneath the lions and oxen [were] certain additions made of thin work. 30 And every base had four brasen wheels, and plates of brass: and the four corners thereof had undersetters: under the laver [were] undersetters molten, at the side of every addition. 31 And the mouth of it within the chapiter and above [was] a cubit: but the mouth thereof [was] round [after] the work of the base, a cubit and an half: and also upon the mouth of it [were] gravings with their borders, foursquare, not round. 32 And under the borders [were] four wheels; and the axletrees of the wheels [were joined] to the base: and the height of a wheel [was] a cubit and half a cubit. 33 And the work of the wheels [was] like the work of a chariot wheel: their axletrees and their naves, and their felloes, and their spokes [were] all molten. 34 And [there were] four undersetters to the four corners of one base: [and] the undersetters [were] of the very base itself. 35 And in the top of the base

* This sea was about sixteen feet in diameter, and held near two hundred and fifty barrels. It was the business of the Nethinims, the remnant of the Gibeonites, to fill it. It was used for washing the sacrifice, and the hands and feet of the Levites; for which purpose the water came out of pipes at the bottom. It stood upon twelve oxen, which were both a support and ornament to it.

was there a round compass of half a cubit high: and on the top of the base the ledges thereof and the borders thereof [were] of the same. 36 For on the plates of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof, he graved cherubims, lions and palm-trees; according to the proportion of every one, and additions round about. 37 After this [manner] he made the ten bases: all of them had one casting, one measure, [and] one size.

38 Then made he ten lavers, *or washing vessels*, of brass, *which were placed on the ten stands:* one laver contained forty baths, *about five barrels:* [and] every laver was four cubits: [and] upon every one of the ten bases one laver. 39 And he put five bases on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house: and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward over against the south.

40 And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, *for the fire*, and the basons, *to receive the blood of the sacrifice*. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king Solomon for the house of the LORD: 41 The two pillars, and the [two] bowls of the chapiters that [were] on the top of the two pillars; and the two networks, to cover the two bowls of the chapiters which [were] upon the top of the pillars; 42 And four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, [even] two rows of pomegranates for one network, to cover the two bowls of the chapiters that [were] upon the pillars; 43 And the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases; 44 And one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea; 45 And the pots, *to boil the parts of the peace offering which were allowed to the priests*, and the shovels, and the basons; and all these vessels which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, [were of] bright brass, *all made of the best polished brass*. 46 In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan, *that being a proper place to make the moulds*. 47 And Solomon left all the vessels [unweighed,] because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the brass found out; *it was so great, that keeping an exact account was burdensome; and the workmen were all honest and faithful.*

48 And Solomon made all the vessels that [pertained] unto the house of the LORD, *according to the pattern given him by David from God* (1 Chron. xxviii. 19.); the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shew bread [was,] *Exodus* xxv. 30. 49 And the candlesticks of pure gold, *the large sconces or branches*, five on the right [side,] and five on the left, before

the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs [of] gold, 50 And the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers [of] pure gold; and the hinges [of] gold, [both] for the doors of the inner house, the most holy [place, and] for the doors of the house, [to wit,] of the temple; *that every thing might be alike magnificent, even the hinges of the doors were of gold.* 51 So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; [even] the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD, *that is, what remained above what was consumed in the temple; and likewise the remains of the tabernacle.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. ALL this wealth, splendour, and magnificence, was intended to excite veneration in the worshippers, and to prevent idolatry. The temples of idols were splendid, and seduced many that were led away by the sight of the eye; but none were so glorious as this temple. All the pains and expense Solomon was at, suggests to us how ready we should be to honour the Lord with our substance, and devote our wealth to his service. Grand and sumptuous churches are of no real service now; but every thing ought to be decent and convenient. To contribute to supply our brethren with such places, is an important and excellent charity. Solomon did not build his own till he had finished God's house. He should have the first and best of our services.

2. Whatever we do to support the house and worship of God, we should look to him for assistance and strength. The two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, suggest this thought to us. While we keep close to him and his worship, we may hope for a continuance of his favours. He will guard our temples in peace, and strengthen the heart of every sincere and humble worshipper.

3. The frequent washing, for which the laver was designed, is often represented in scripture as an emblem of that purity and holiness, which God under the gospel requires of his worshippers. It is not the putting away the filth of the flesh only, but consists in washing the heart from all wickedness; in having clean hands, free from every act of injustice, dishonesty, and every thing contrary to gospel purity. If we desire the acceptance of our prayers

and services, let us wash our hands in innocency, and humbly seek acceptance through the blood of Christ, *which cleanseth from all sin.*

CHAP. VIII. 1—30.

The bringing of the ark into the temple, and its solemn dedication; Solomon's address to the people on the nature and design of this appearance, and his prayer to God.

1 THEN Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which [is] Zion*. 2 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon, *multitudes of the common people, as well as the grandees,* at the feast in the month Ethanim, which [is] the seventh month, *that is, at the feast of tabernacles.* 3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. *It was properly the business of the Levites to carry the ark, but the priests did it on some extraordinary occasions, as here, when the ark was to be fixed.* 4 And they brought up the ark of the LORD, and the tabernacle of the congregation, *that which Moses made,* (Exodus xxxvi. 8.), *which now they laid up in the temple, as a sacred monument, never to be removed again,* and all the holy vessels that [were] in the tabernable, *all the utensils belonging to it, and holy vessels, the candlesticks, and table, &c.,* even those did the priests and the Levites bring up. 5 And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, [were] with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep, and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. *There was a grand procession, which stopped at certain places to offer sacrifices, either on the ground, or on altars occasionally erected.* 6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house to the most holy [place, even] under the wings of the cherubims; *it was brought into the most holy*

* It is generally thought this was the year of jubile, when there was a greater concourse of people at Jerusalem, and it was a season of great joy. He assembled all the princes of the tribes, the heads of families or clans; and their business was to bring up the ark from Zion, that part of the city which David had built, to mount Moriah, where the temple now stood; till that time the temple was an house without an inhabitant.

place, and situated between the cherubims, under their spreading wings. 7 For the cherubims spread forth [their] two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 8 And they drew out the staves *by which it was carried,* that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy [place] before the oracle, *or, as it is in* 2 Chron. v. 9., *on the outside of the ark, at a distance from it; which would be a guide to the priest when he went in on the day of atonement to sprinkle the blood, as the oracle was dark, except what light the cloud of glory occasioned, which he was not to look upon;* and they were not seen without, *in the holy place strictly so called:* and there they are unto this day, *so long as the temple stood.* 9 [There was] nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made [a covenant] with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt, *for Aaron's rod and the pot of manna were by the side of it.*

10 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy [place,] that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, *who now came to take possession of the house by the cloud, which was the symbol of his presence, (see* 2 Chron. v. 11, *&c.)* 11 So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD*.

12 Then spake Solomon, *to encourage them and dissipate their fears,* The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness†. 13 I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever; *he welcomed this token of his presence and approbation, and begged he would accept it as his own, and dwell in it for ever.* 14 And the king turned his face about‡, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood;) 15 And he said, Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled [it,] saying, 16 Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city, *no particular place,* out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my

* At first there was a large thick and dark cloud, from whence, after Solomon had finished his prayer, insupportable brightness issued. This was a token of God's acceptance of them; it did honour to the ark and temple, and confirmed the people's belief of what they had so often read in the books of Moses, of the glory of the Lord. Upon this, the priest came out of the temple in great consternation, and the people, struck with horror, began to be afraid.

† He had in effect said so, as all his appearances had been in a cloud, on mount Sinai and in the wilderness, and on the tabernacle.

‡ He stood on a scaffold of brass, in the court before the house of the Lord.

people Israel, *and showed him the place that I designed.* 17 And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 18 And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. 19 Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name. 20 And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, *his promise in giving him a son,* and I am risen up in the room of David my father and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel, *who hath enabled me to execute this design.* 21 And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein [is] the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, *that is, the table of the covenant which contained the tenure by which they held the land of Canaan, and the rules of their duty.*

22 And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD* in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: 23 And he said, LORD God of Israel, [there is] no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: 24 Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled [it] with thine hand, as [it is] this day. Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me. 26 And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father; *he entreats that God would fulfil what remained to his posterity, and that the kingdom of Israel might continue in his family; and then breaks out into high admiration of the condescension and grace of God, in dwelling with men, and vouchsafing them the tokens of his presence.* 27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I

* He now turned about towards the altar, which lay between him and the temple, and spread forth his hands, and afterwards fell on his knees, as the most proper gesture for prayer, and offered a most noble and devout address to God. He began with adoring his excellencies and his faithfulness to his promises to David.

have builded? *He acknowledges God to be infinite and immense, lest the people should imagine that Jehovah was like the heathen gods, confined to one place; the highest heavens, all the worlds of light and glory, could not comprehend or contain him.* 28 Yet, *though thou art present every where,* have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day: 29 That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, [even] toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place*. 30 And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive. *Still, to prevent any wrong notions of God, he adds, hear in heaven, the residence of thy brightest glory, of which this is but an emblem, and forgive; because sin would prevent the acceptance and success of their prayers.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is the duty and honour of the children of good men to pursue their pious schemes, and complete the good works they began: so Solomon did; and speaks of it with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction, and thankfulness to God, who enabled him to do it. It is no dishonour to build on a good foundation; but a great disgrace when the children of God's people degenerate, and do not pursue the good designs of their parents.

2. The thick darkness, in which God appeared, was an emblem of the darkness of that dispensation, in which there were so much of types and shadows, and obscurity. Rays of glory indeed broke out, but still the minds were terrified and enslaved by it. Let us bless God for the brighter dispensation of the gospel; *where we all, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into his image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.*

3. We should remember, that good designs and intentions are

* The people in the court worshipped towards the oracle, where the symbol of the divine presence resided; and in other parts of the country they looked towards the temple; so Daniel did in Babylon, Daniel vi. 10. Hence we read so often of *worshipping towards the temple*, as an expression of their faith in Jehovah who dwelt there.

approved and commended by God, though he gives not the opportunity of putting them into execution. David did well in that *it was in his heart to build a house for God.* This is an encouragement to us to be laying schemes for his glory; nevertheless good intentions are but hypocrisy without vigorous endeavours. If the heart be intent upon serving God, and the hands diligently employed in his work, and *if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.*

4. Solomon, with all his wealth and magnificence, never looked so truly great and glorious as he did in the attitude in which this chapter represents him. He was great on the throne, on the bench of justice, in his buildings, furniture and equipage; but never so truly illustrious, as when prostrating himself before God, and leading the devotions of Israel. It was for his honour that he could pray, and suit his petitions to the occasion with so much propriety and affection. It was for his honour that he was willing to pray before this vast congregation, and did not turn over the work to an inferior person. The reverence of his posture, and the devotion of his heart, are worthy the imitation of the greatest men.

5. God's promises to us should encourage our prayers. This Solomon makes use of as a plea in his prayer. What was said to David, and of Israel, on this he grounds his petition for favour and mercy to the land, in the various circumstances that might occur. God's promises are to guide our devotions, to direct us what to pray for, and excite our hope that he will graciously hear our supplications, and send an answer of peace.

6. It becomes us whenever we approach to God, to remember his immensity and omnipresence. This will prevent rudeness and presumption, and fill our hearts with an awful sense of the Majesty we address; it will lead us to admire his condescension and grace, in permitting our approach to him, who is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. We should particularly recollect, that he knows our thoughts, therefore we must be serious and sincere. He knows the plague of our hearts, and allows us to spread our sins and our sorrows before him. He knows how to support us under every burden; to take it away, or to cure every plague and grief, both of body and mind.

CHAP. VIII. 31, to the end.

A continuation of Solomon's prayer; his blessing the people; and the sacrifice and feast which followed the dedication.

31 IF any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: 32 Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness; *if a man denies what was lent, or committed to him by his neighbour, and, there being no witness, he is called upon to purge himself by an oath, and to touch the altar, then do thou plainly show who has right on his side.* 33 When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house; *or rather, towards this house; when they confess the justice of their punishment, renounce their false gods, and turn to thee:* 34 Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again *out of their captivity* unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers. 35 When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them, *without which they cannot hope for mercy:* 36 Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance; *first by thy grace make them better, and then give them rain in its season.* 37 If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, [or] if there be caterpiller; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness [there be;] 38 What prayer and supplication soever be [made] by any man, *any particular person,* [or] by all thy people Israel, *by any town or city, who, being afflicted, shall join together in their prayers,* which shall know every man the plague of his own heart*, *when he makes a solemn moan for any thing that lies*

* In Chronicles, it is *his grief and sorrow;* any bodily affliction, or rather sin, which is the cause of grief.

heavy upon his spirits, and spread forth his hands toward this house: 39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, [even] thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) *if his heart is upright, grant his request, for thou canst not be deceived with words, but wilt give according to the sincerity of our repentance;* 40 That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers; *be led by thy goodness to serve thee religiously, and not return to folly. He then opens the fullness of his benevolent heart in praying for strangers.* 41 Moreover concerning a stranger, that [is] not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; *who hear the fame of thy greatness and goodness, and are disposed to come to Jerusalem to worship God, and become proselytes to his religion;* 42 (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; 43 Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, *to encourage them, and prove thy divinity, and thy relation to Israel,* and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as [do] thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name, *belongs to thee, has thy gracious presence in it, and may carry a good report back, and so spread thy name and thy glory.* 44 If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and [toward] the house that I have built for thy name: 45 Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. 46 If they sin against thee, *if they revolt from thee* (for [there is] no man that sinneth not), *the general depravity of human nature makes me fear they will, which he urges as an argument for compassion and mercy,* and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; 47 [Yet] if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; 48 And [so] return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, (Dan. vi. 10.) which thou gavest unto their

fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; *if they repent, and bethink themselves, are contrite and confess their sins with all their aggravations, and turn from them and reform;* 49 Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, *or right,* 50 And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them; *that their enemies may treat them with mercy while they are continued in captivity, and give them leave to return;* 51 For they [be] thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron*: 52 That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee. 53 For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, [to be] thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O LORD God; *he urges it, by their relation to God as his peculiar people, by the law that was given them, and the promise made to Moses.* See 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42.

54 And it was [so,] that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees, with his hands spread up to heaven, *and fire came down and consumed the sacrifices, which were on the brasen altar, and the glory of the Lord filled the house,* (1 Chron. vii. 1—3.), *a bright lustre broke out of the dark cloud, and affected the people greatly.* 55 And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel, *he turned about to the people, and blessed them,* with a loud voice, saying, 56 Blessed [be] the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. *He here reminds them of God's fidelity, and prays for his continued presence.* 57 The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us: 58 That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes,

* Solomon urges as an argument, that they were God's inheritance, which he had purchased and made his own, and therefore hopes that he will not lose the glory of what he had formerly done for them; and concludes with a general request, that God would hear all his praying people.

and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers; *as we have the external tokens of his favour, so may we have his grace, to observe the statutes and ordinances which he hath given us; this is the greatest blessing, and the means of securing the continuance of all other privileges.* 59 And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: *thus he expresses his hope that God would hear his prayer, and show signal favour to Israel.* 60 That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD [is] God, [and that there is] none else; *that other nations may be led by it to worship and glorify him. He then concludes the solemnity with a word of exhortation, charging them to continue obedient, as the condition of the divine favour and blessing.* 61 Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

62 And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. 63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, *a small part of which was destroyed; other parts belonged to the priests, and the remainder was a feast for the people who were assembled;* two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD; *set it apart to holy uses, in an holy manner, and joined in sacrifices to God, and in prayer and thanksgiving.* 64 The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that [was] before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that [was] before the LORD [was] too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings. *Probably many altars were erected on this occasion, which were afterwards removed into the court of the people, because the court of the priests was not large enough.*

65 And at that time Solomon held a feast, *called the feast of dedication,* and all Israel with him, a great congregation from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days *more for the feast of tabernacles,* [even] fourteen days. *These peace offerings were offered during all these days, and served to feast this great concourse of people the whole time.* 66 On the eighth day, *that is, the day after the feast of tabernacles was over,* he sent the people

away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people; *they thanked the king for his kindness and care, especially in establishing the worship of God; they prayed to God to prosper his reign, and blessed him for all the great things that had been done for David, and his son, and all Israel by their means.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IF we desire the success of our prayers, and the continuance of our prosperity, we must reform our ways and be obedient. Solomon in every branch of his prayer mentions this, to remind the people of the terms of acceptance, and to prevent their mocking God, by asking his favour while they were disobedient; and he particularly mentions it in the close of his address to them. To this purpose saith the psalmist, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*

2. The goodness and kindness of God to our fathers, is a ground to pray and hope that he will show the same to us. *We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, what God has done in time past;* and he has still the same power and grace. Let us pray that the same blessing may descend on us; we need it as much as they; but then we must imitate their piety and zeal, and endeavour even to exceed them. Then we may hope that the God of our fathers will bless us.

3. The settlement of public worship, and the tokens of the divine presence in it, give great joy to every pious Israelite. What a pleasure was it to the people to see the temple finished, the ark brought into it, and God giving these evident tokens of his favour and acceptance; to see the king so joyful and devout, and every one so well pleased! Thus, when our governors secure to us the liberty of public worship, when a spirit of devotion and zeal for the house of God prevails, and his people are made joyful in the house of prayer, there is great reason for thankfulness; and it should be our prayer that this may be more and more our case. In every instance in which it is so, the song of the priests and people should be ours; *the Lord is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. Amen.*

CHAPTER IX.

God's answer to Solomon's prayer; the mutual presents between him and Hiram; with some account of his buildings and navy.

1 AND it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, 2 That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon, *that is, in a dream by night**. 3 And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou has built, to put my name there for ever, *by the cloud and the fire consuming the sacrifices;* and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually, *my gracious providence and tender love and care; but this depended upon his good behaviour.* 4 And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, [and] wilt keep my statutes, and my judgments; *if thou wilt be as upright as David was in the main course of his life and reign,* 5 Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. 6 [But] if ye shall at all turn from following me, *and revolt to idolatry,* ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments [and] my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: 7 Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them, *I will drive them from thence;* and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, *remove my presence from it;* and Israel shall be a proverb, and a byword among all people†: 8 And at this house, [which] is high, *that is, grand, splendid, and renowned for its many sacrifices and worshippers,* every one that passeth by it shall be astonished *at its unexpected and wonderful ruin,* and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land,

* It is generally thought this was after his prayer, the same night; though the first verse seems to intimate, that it was some years after, when he had finished all his buildings, and was in danger of growing proud; and therefore God gave him the caution that follows.

† It is a common proverb, that such or such persons are as miserable as Jews.

and to this house? 9 And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil; *the Jews shall be self-condemned, and be forced to give an account of these calamities, which were owing to their own folly and revolt.*

10 And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD, and the king's house, 11 ([Now] Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees, and with gold, *in exchange for wheat and oil, the commodities of Canaan,* according to all his desire,) that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee*. 12 And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not, *and therefore he returned them back again.* (2 Chron. viii. 2.) 13 And he said, What cities [are] these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day, *that is, dirty, or displeasing* †. 14 And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold ‡. *No doubt Solomon made him a recompense some other way, as the offer of the cities was not agreeable; and the correspondence wisely begun was amicably ended.*

15 And this [is] the reason of the levy *of men and money* which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the LORD, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer. 16 [For] Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city §, and given it [for] a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife. 17 And Solomon built Gezer, and Beth-horon the nether, 18 And Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land, *in the north part of the country, in the land of Hamath,* 19 And all the cities of store, *that is, for corn and ammunition,* that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which

* These were inhabited by Canaanites, (as may seem by 2 Chron. viii. 2.), called, in the New Testament, Galilee of the Gentiles.

† The land was exceedingly rich and fruitful; but, as is generally the case with such countries as have deep soil, the roads were dirty. This did not suit the Tyrians, who delighted in trade, and did not choose country business. We find afterwards that Solomon sent some Israelites there who inhabited them.

‡ About six hundred fifty-seven thousand and fifty-two pounds sterling.

§ Some have supposed that they had behaved ill, and that Solomon, having his hands full of business, got his father in law to punish them, and extirpate the inhabitants.

Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

20 [And] all the people [that were] left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which [were] not of the children of Israel, *but had forsaken their idolatry, (else David would have driven them out also),* 21 Their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bondservice unto this day; *they became bearers of burdens, and hewers in the mountains.* 22 But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen: but they [were] men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen; *the Israelites were put to no servile labour, but were officers of the court, governors of provinces and cities, captains and soldiers.* 23 These [were] the chief of the officers that [were] over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, which bare rule over the people that wrought in the work.

24 But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David* unto her house which [Solomon] had built for her: then did he build Millo.

25 And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt offerings, and peace offerings upon the altar which he built unto the LORD, and he burnt incense upon the altar that [was] before the LORD. So he finished the house. *He never failed to keep the three solemn feasts, and burn incense to the Lord, that is, it was provided at his expense, and burnt with a peculiar reference to him.*

26 And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which [is] beside Eloth on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom, *which David had conquered; and perhaps the commerce was begun by David, as he had so much gold.* 27 And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, *who were excellent sailors,* shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. 28 And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought [it] to king Solomon †.

* In 2 Chron. viii. 11., we find that this place was esteemed peculiarly holy, because the ark had so long resided there. It was not therefore fit that she, who was a stranger, and probably had many Egyptians with her, who could not easily forsake all their idolatrous practices, should continue there.

† Learned men are not agreed where Ophir is situated; but the length of the voyage to it, and the commodities brought from thence, naturally lead us to conclude it was somewhere in the East Indies; perhaps as far as China. In Chronicles it is said there were *four hundred and fifty talents* brought to the king. Perhaps thirty was the expense of the voyage, or were given to Hiram's servants; and the four hundred and twenty brought for Solomon's own use. This was a vast sum, amounting to considerably more than two millions.

REFLECTIONS.

1. The caution which God gave Solomon in this chapter, reminds us, that if we desire the continuance of our privileges, we must be an obedient and holy people. No establishment of the externals of religion, no splendour of the church, or forms of worship, can secure the divine favour, and lengthen our tranquillity, without obedience to God's laws and keeping his commandments. Let us impress this truth upon our hearts, that we *be not high-minded but fear;* and let every particular person remember, that doing the will of God is necessary to the acceptance of our prayers, and the continuance of the divine blessing. We see,

2. The wisdom of God in the different genius and inclinations of men. Hiram and his men loved the streets of Tyre better than the dirt of the country. The Israelites preferred the country to the town. Merchantmen and tradesmen are pleased with the noise and hurry of the city and sea ports; while farmers love the quietness of the country. And in their different ways and occupations, they both contribute to the welfare of the land and the benefit of their neighbours. These different inclinations are appointed by Providence to promote the happiness of mankind, and his name is to be praised therein.

3. Observe for the honour of trade, that these two princes were employed in it. They thought it not beneath them to fit out ships and commence merchants. Solomon thought it no impeachment of his wisdom, though he was the wisest of men, nor a lessening of his glory, though he was the richest and greatest, to be a merchant, to go himself to his port, and to see with his own eyes. This shames the folly and pride of those, who, boasting of their being noblemen and gentlemen, think that trade is a dishonour. While many of them think it no dishonour to be wicked, to be in debt, and to cheat and defraud all about them. Once more,

4. Let merchantmen and tradesmen remember what Solomon suggests, that *wisdom is the principal thing;* that true religion *is the one thing needful.* Solomon, who knew the sweets of trade, and who brought in vast wealth by his navy, informs us, and we should all attend to the admonition, Prov. iii. 13—17., *Happy*

is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

CHAPTER X.

An account of Solomon's interview with the queen of Sheba, and of his wealth and grandeur.

1 AND when the queen of Sheba* heard, *perhaps by some of his ships which touched on her coasts in their way to Ophir*, of the fame of Solomon, *of his wealth and wisdom, and* concerning the name of the LORD, *the great things he had done for the honour, worship, and service of God*, she came to prove him with hard questions†. 2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart; *she had liberty to propose what questions she pleased.* 3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not [any] thing hid from the king, which he told her not; *he answered them all to her satisfaction.* 4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, *the house or temple for God, and the palace for himself*, 5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers and their apparel, and his cup bearers, *the order of his family, his attendants and provisions*, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD, *the grand walk or terrace from his own palace to the temple*, there was no more spirit in her, *she was quite astonished.* 6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. 7 Howbeit I believed

* Sheba was part of Arabia Felix, which lay south of Canaan; and therefore she is called *the queen of the south*. Her country was bounded by the ocean, and therefore she is said *to come from the uttermost parts of the earth*.

† It was an ancient diversion among princes to propose curious and difficult questions, in order to try each other's sagacity and skill.

not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen [it:] and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard; *she thought common fame might magnify things, and that what she should see would fall short of what was told her; but it greatly exceeded it.* 8 Happy [are] thy men, *thy subjects in general,* happy [are] these thy servants, *thy courtiers* which stand continually before thee, [and] that hear thy wisdom; *not so much because of thy wealth and honour, but as they have an opportunity of hearing thy wisdom, and improving their minds.* 9 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. *This was a grave and solemn admonition both to him and his people. They ought to thank God who gave them such a king; and he should remember, that all his wealth, power, and wisdom, were given him for the good of his subjects; not to live in ease, splendour, and pleasure; but to consult their happiness.* 10 And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, *the products of her own country,* and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. 11 And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, *an hard wood like brazil,* and precious stones. 12 And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, *or rails for the terrace,* and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day. 13 And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba, all her desire, whatsoever she asked, *any curiosity she had a mind to,* besides [that] which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

14 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold, *worth considerably more than three millions.* 15 Besides [that he had] of the merchantmen, *the inhabitants of the north, who brought the commodities of their own country,* and of the traffic of the spice merchants, *other merchants who paid custom,* and of all the kings of Arabia, *the princes who were tributary to him,* and of the governors of the country, *the revenue which came in from the several provinces.*

16 And king Solomon made two hundred targets [of] beaten

gold: six hundred [shekels] of gold went to one target. 17 And [he made] three hundred shields [of] beaten gold*; three pound of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

18 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it, *or rather, inlaid or studded it,* with the best gold. 19 The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne [was] round behind *a semicircle:* and [there were] stays on either side on the place of the seat, *two arms like an elbow-chair,* and two lions stood beside the stays, *as large as life, for supporters.* 20 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps, *for ornament:* there was not the like made in any kingdom. 21 And all king Solomon's drinking vessels [were of] gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon [were of] pure gold; none [were of] silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. *We have then an account how Solomon came by all his wealth.* 22 For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish, with the navy of Hiram †: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks, *or parrots, which are still the commodities of that country.* 23 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. 24 And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. 25 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. *The great men of neighbouring nations so highly esteemed his wisdom, that they courted his friendship, and sent him presents annually, as a token of respect, and from a desire that the friendship and alliance might be continued.*

26 And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem; *to be ready on any emergency, as well as for state.*

27 And the king made silver [to be] in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he [to be] as the sycamore trees, *or wild fig trees,* that [are] in the vale for abundance; *hyperbolical expressions for the great plenty of silver and cedar.*

* These were probably designed to be carried before him when he went in state; at other times, to be hung up in the grand hall at the house of Lebanon.

† There were two fleets, one belonging to Hiram, in which Solomon had a share; and one belonging to Solomon, in which Hiram had a share. These sailed through the straits of Gibraltar quite to Guinea.

28 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. 29 And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred [shekels] of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring [them] out by their means *.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How solicitous should we be to seek wisdom, especially of those who are most eminent for it. Many travel for wealth, curiosity and custom; this princess travelled for a nobler end, to learn wisdom; perhaps, to gain the knowledge of Jehovah and his service; and was at much pains and cost about it. Let us desire to learn wisdom whatever it may cost us, especially from Jesus Christ who lay in the bosom of the Father, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. Many are fonder of discussing hard questions, than gaining useful knowledge; but let us seek true wisdom. We have no need to travel far for it. We have in our Bible what is most important and most plain: *the word is nigh unto us*, Matt. xi. 42. We learn,

2. The happiness of those who have the opportunities of knowledge and piety. *Happy are thy people, happy are these thy servants!* And thus happy are the servants who live in religious families, if they did but know how to value and improve their privileges, far superior to any advantages of this world. Happy are the servants of God, who dwell in his house, eat at his table, behold his glory in his temple, and have so many opportunities of growing wise to salvation. Above all, blessed are they who dwell in his house above, who see his face, and sing his praise.

3. The reflection which the queen of Sheba made on Solomon's advancement, is applicable to Christ. God delighted in him, therefore made him king of the church, and empowered him

* This verse gives an account of his commerce with Egypt. It is rather obscurely expressed. Some translate *linen yarn* to be *toll* or *custom*. I understand it thus: as Egypt was famous for horses, the king would not suffer them to be exported without a large tribute. For this Solomon compounded with him for so much a year; so his merchants went down and bought and sold them to neighbouring states and princes, each horse at about eighteen pounds. Some think it was so much duty; and a chariot, in which was four horses, was six hundred shekels, that is, about seventy-four pounds. I think this was a duty rather than the price. It may seem extravagant; but money was then very plentiful. Thus Solomon enriched his own country, and appeared the great friend and protector of trade.

to communicate happiness to men. Out of love to mankind God hath made him king, to save them from ruin; to govern them by his wise and wholesome laws, and make all that are dutiful, loyal, and obedient, completely and eternally happy. This demands our warmest praise. *Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift.*

4. We may reflect once more, how good a judge Solomon was wherein true happiness consisted, and what regard should be paid to his judgment who declared, that *vanity of vanities, all was vanity:* and he wrote a whole book to prove this. May we learn wisdom of him; and make a right estimate of the world, and all that is in the world. Real religion will make us happier than he was with all his wealth and honours.

CHAPTER XI.

We have seen Solomon in the height of his glory, but here is a melancholy alteration. We are now to read of his degeneracy; of God's displeasure and threatening to him; of the enemies God raised up against him; and of his death and successor.

1 **BUT** king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, [and] Hittites; 2 Of the nations [concerning] which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: [for] surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. *He was guilty of two sins against the law; the one was in a multiplicity of wives, the other in taking strange women.* 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. *These were taken for state and pomp; as eastern princes to this day have a great number of wives, many of whom perhaps they scarce ever see.* 4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old [that] his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. *He did not renounce Jehovah, but joined the worship of other gods with him; he allowed his wives to do it at first privately, and then more openly. He attended himself in some instances out of complaisance, or partook of their feasts;*

which he never would have done if his mind had not been depraved by sensual pleasures. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as [did] David his father; *he was not like David, who kept to the worship of God and never joined in idolatry.* 7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination for Moab, in the hill that [is] before Jerusalem, and of Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon*. 8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods; *to oblige them all, he had some image or temple to the honour of their several gods.*

9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice; *at Gibeon, and at Jerusalem after the prayer at the dedication of the temple.* 10 And had commanded him *expressly, at both those appearances,* concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. 11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant *Jeroboam.* 12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake; *to humble him still more, he tells him he did not do it for his sake, but for his father David's:* [but] I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. 13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; [but] will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen†.

14 And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, *in his old age, when he was most desirous of rest and quiet,* Hadad the Edomite: he [was] of the king's seed in Edom. 15 For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom; 16 (For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom:) 17 That Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad [being] yet a little child. 18 And

* This was done on mount Olivet, in sight of the temple and inhabitants of Jerusalem; he was not quite so bad as to do it there: and this place continued till the days of Josiah.

† This was another mitigation of the punishment, that he would not rend all; but still this humbling circumstance is added, that it was for David's sake, and Jerusalem's sake.

they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran, *where he waited to see whether Pharaoh would receive them:* and they took men with them out of Paran, *he hired men, that he might appear like a prince, and have an equipage suitable to his quality;* and they came to Egypt, unto Pharaoh king of Egypt; which gave him an house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land. 19 And Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen*. 20 And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh, *who showed great affection to the child.* 21 And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead†, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country. 22 Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise‡.

23 And God stirred him up [another] adversary, Rezon, the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah; *he was a general who fled when his army was beaten by David:* 24 And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them [of Zobah:] and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus§. 25 And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief that Hadad [did:] and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria: *he was encouraged by Hadad, and brought the country round about Damascus into subjection.*

26 And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, *a great officer of state,* (ver. 28., chap. ix. 22.), whose mother's name [was] Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up [his] hand against the king; *not in open rebellion, but secretly sowed the seeds of discord and faction in the tribes of which*

* Some think he met with the more favourable reception, as he might bring with him the knowledge of some arts or sciences, which the Egyptians wanted.

† It seems that Joab was as much dreaded as David, after that terrible execution of the Edomites.

‡ Hadad accordingly went home; and, probably at Pharaoh's intercession, Solomon permitted him to stay, and he became tributary to him. But towards the close of Solomon's reign, when he began to be old and negligent he revolted, and grew troublesome, in order to avenge the blood of his countrymen.

§ David kept a garrison at Damascus; but when Solomon was grown old, he neglected his conquests, so that Rezon easily recovered the city.

he was receiver-general. 27 And this [was] the cause that he lifted up [his] hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, [and] repaired the breaches of the city of David his father. 28 And the man Jeroboam [was] a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph. *Solomon went to see the work, and perceiving him to be a diligent, active, bold man, made him receiver-general of Ephraim and Manasseh.* 29 And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, *where he had been to settle his accounts,* that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment, *that he might appear at court in a suitable dress;* and they two [were] alone in the field, *the servants perhaps being sent forward:* 30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that [was] on him, and rent it [in] twelve pieces, *as a prophetical sign, which he proceeded to explain.* 31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: 32 (But he shall have one tribe* for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) 33 Because that they have forsaken me†, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do [that which is] right in mine eyes, and [to keep] my statutes and my judgments, as [did] David his father. 34 Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes‡: 35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, [even] ten tribes. 36 And unto his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there; *that there may be a succession of kings to guide my people, and cheer*

* He had in fact two tribes, Benjamin being mixed with Judah. Jerusalem stood partly in both of them: they were however reckoned but one tribe, Benjamin being small.

† Many of the people were led away, especially the courtiers, who generally will be of the king's religion.

‡ This was an admonition to Jeroboam not to molest Solomon all his days, nor imitate his example in becoming an idolater; else he would forfeit his privileges likewise.

them by their comfortable influence. 37 And I will take thee *from thy present station,* and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, *in a flourishing kingdom,* and shalt be king over Israel, *but not over Judah.* 38 And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do [that is] right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. 39 And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever. *His kingdom shall remain and return from captivity; and at length be established for ever, in the Messiah, as the Jewish writers interpret it.* 40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam*. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, *a new king, perhaps no relation to the former; one who looked with a greedy eye upon Solomon's wealth; and after his death came and took a great part of it away;* and *Jeroboam* was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

41 And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, [are] they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? 42 And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel [was] forty years. 43 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

REFLECTIONS.

1. From hence we learn, the dreadful consequences of indulging fleshly lusts. Who would have thought this great and wise man could have been so sadly insnared. After all the warnings he gave others, he became a slave to his appetite. What signified all his wisdom, when his passions ran away with him! This melancholy story contains an awful admonition to us all. Let not those who are advanced in years think themselves quite secure; though these are properly youthful lusts, and are then most dangerous, yet caution is necessary for all. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.*

2. In proportion to our privileges and advantages, is our guilt increased, if we break the commands of God. Solomon had

* This was a sign of dotage; perhaps the prophet made no secret of it, or gave Jeroboam no injunction to conceal it.

great advantages by David's example and instructions; this aggravated his folly. Children of godly parents should beware; and serve the God of their fathers, and walk in their pious steps. It is observed that God appeared to him twice. Let us remember that God observes how often he has appeared to and for us; in the bounties of Providence, in the checks of conscience, in the workings of the Spirit, and admonitions of his word. This aggravates our guilt if we forget him, and have our hearts turned away from him.

3. All who sin against God injure their own peace and happiness. While Solomon was virtuous, there was no adversary or evil occurrence; but when he revolted, various enemies were stirred up; God reserved this scourge for him, and when he revolted, they corrected him. Peace ends when impiety and lasciviousness begin. Sin not only separates between God and the soul, but arms innumerable enemies against us. Therefore,

4. Let those who have made the most public professions of religion, and shown great zeal in it, continue on their guard, lest they depart from God. How excellently well did Solomon begin his reign! with how much seriousness! and what a prayer did he offer! But how sadly was his glory tarnished by what is here told! it made him to set in a cloud. *Let him* then *that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* And let us all use great caution and watchfulness, even to the end of life.

5. Whatever the christian's enjoyments or comforts in this life are, he should long to be at home. The conduct of this Edomite suggests this to us, v. 22. He lived in ease, pomp and splendour, and wanted nothing: but still he says, *Let me go.* This world is not the home or rest of christians; their hearts and affections breathe after heaven; they *desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.*

CHAPTER XII.

The people's petition to Rehoboam, and his foolish answer; the revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David under Jeroboam, and the sinful methods he took to establish his kingdom.

1 AND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king*. 2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard [of it,] (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;) 3 That they sent and called him; *knowing his disaffection to the family of Solomon, the elders and heads of tribes sent for him, desiring the presence and assistance of a man who had so much reputation and interest.* And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, 4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee†. 5 And he said unto them, Depart yet [for] three days, then come again to me; *he took time to inquire and examine into the truth of their allegation.* And the people departed.

6 And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father, while he yet lived, *his old privy-councillors,* and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? 7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever; *give them condescending and obliging answers, and thou wilt win their hearts, and prevent their revolt.* 8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, *about his own age,* [and] which stood before him, *whom he was fond of:* 9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer

* The people were disposed to revolt, and therefore met at Shechem, which was in the centre of the kingdom, to make him king, upon condition that he would redress their grievances.

† Their complaint was not of his idolatry, but heavy taxes and oppression. We should imagine this complaint was groundless, unless his immoderate expense in maintaining such a tribe of females might burden the people, or the defence of his kingdom against his enemies, mentioned before.

this people who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? 10 And the young men that were grown up with him *thought the old men were timorous, and had therefore put him upon acknowledging his father's oppression, and they* spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou [it] lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little [finger] shall be thicker than my father's loins; *I am determined to lay burdens upon you, as much heavier as a man's loins are larger than his little finger.* 11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions*. 12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; 14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father [also] chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. *Thus he took their foolish advice, and answered like a tyrant, not like a king; and thought to frighten them to obedience by this blustering language.* 15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat; *God infatuated his counsels to answer his own purpose and fulfil his word.*

16 So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither [have we] inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents†. 17 But [as for] the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram who [was] over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died‡. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get

* These were a sort of lashes with pieces of iron fixed at the end, like a spur rowel, as some Jewish writers describe them.

† They here renounce their allegiance to David and his family, and call him in contempt the son of Jesse; intimating, that Rehoboam, big as he talked, descended from a family as obscure as any of theirs, and in a taunting way bid him take care of himself, and they would take care of themselves.

‡ He here tries another method to recover them, but it was a very foolish one:

nim up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem, *apprehending the storm would next fall upon him.* 19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day, *and would not be governed by any of his race.* 20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel, *without any express condition that appears, except a promise to ease them:* there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

21 And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel*, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. 22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 23 Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, 24 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house, for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart according to the word of the LORD.

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, *where he was chosen king, and fortified it for a royal city,* and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel, *some other fortification, knowing the people were fickle.* 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, *reasoned with himself, consulted his own imaginations and carnal policies, not God's pleasure, and said,* Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: 27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, *at the three great feasts, and other solemn occasions, the splendour of the city, the remembrance of David and Solomon, the persuasion of the priests and Levites will, conspire to lead them to unite with Judah again; and* then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, [even] unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam

heavy taxes were what they complained of, and he sends Adoram the collector, the most obnoxious man in the whole kingdom. Perhaps he thought they would regard a venerable old man, who was a servant to David and Solomon, and now near an hundred years old; but in the height of their resentment they stoned him that he died.

* When he found persuasion would not do, he tries what force could effect. The men of Judah had a strong attachment to the house of David, who was one of their tribe, and they determined to attack them before the new king was settled.

king of Judah. 28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and *he* made two calves [of] gold, *like the deities of the Egyptians among whom he had dwelt**, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, *a representation of the God of Israel,* which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29 And he set the one in Beth-el, *in the south, a place noted for God's appearance to Jacob,* and the other put he in Dan, *in the north, famous for Micah's Teraphim; both at a great distance from Rehoboam, as they chose to be secure from assaults in their worship.* 30 And this thing became a sin, *it was the beginning of shameful idolatry, and made Israel to sin:* for the people went [to worship] before the one, [even] unto Dan, *with the greatest zeal.* And he made an house of high places, *a temple and altar like that at Jerusalem,* and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi; *or, out of all the people without distinction, lest if they had kept it to the Levites, they should bring them again to God's temple and altar at Jerusalem.* 32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast *of tabernacles* in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that [is] in Judah, *he kept the feast, but changed the season,* and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made; *he not only set up calves and an altar, but offered sacrifices and burnt incense himself*†: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, [even] in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel, and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We here see that wise men sometimes leave behind them foolish children. Rehoboam was born in the first year of Solomon's reign; so that he was now forty years old. He had such

* These were not designed to be worshipped as God, like the Egyptian idols, but only as a medium of divine worship, or as an image of the true God, like Aaron's calf; and thus he strengthened his alliance with Egypt. Though God had promised him a sure house if he did not revolt, yet thus foolishly and wickedly he broke the commands of God, and in this he pretended to consult the ease of the people.

† We find, 2 Chron. xi. 14., that because the Levites would not join with him he expelled them, and gave their possessions to his priests; and they went over to Rehoboam, and all the devout Israelites with them, and thus strengthened the kingdom of Rehoboam.

advantages for improvement in divine and human literature, and in all wisdom, as was very extraordinary, no prince had greater. Yet he acted a mad and foolish part. Parents should take due care in the education of children, but should not raise their expectations too high. They know not how they may prove. This, particularly, is a reason why they should not be concerned to heap up too much wealth for them; because it is only putting instruments of vice into their hands, if they are wicked. Eccles. ii. 18, 19.

2. The readiest way for young men to be ruined, is to follow the advice of their gay companions, and reject the counsel of the more wise and experienced. The former encourage them in their folly; teach them to be proud and self-willed; to abhor and cast off the most equitable restraints. The latter exhort them to be thoughtful, serious, and sober-minded. It is of the greatest importance whose counsel young men hearken to. Those are not their best friends who know how to make them merry, for that will not make them happy. 'If, (as Mr. Henry observes,) you reckon those your best friends who feed your pride, gratify your vanity, and further you in your sinful pleasures, you are already marked for ruin.' *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

3. Proud, imperious, violent language, alienates men's affections, and disposes them to rebel. The old men had learned of their master Solomon that *a soft answer turneth away wrath;* and it had been well for Rehoboam had he taken their advice. But he was headstrong and imperious, and so lost the affections of his people, and the greatest part of his kingdom. Let us learn from this, to open our mouth with gentleness and kindness. Let husbands never be bitter against their wives, nor fathers against their children, nor masters against their servants. Men love to be spoken fair to; and gentleness will do what insolence and violence will never do. Condescension and affability win men's hearts; and *before honour is humility.*

4. Whatever schemes and projects there are in the hearts of men, God is by them fulfilling his own work. Rehoboam intended to show his spirit and authority, Jeroboam to gain a kingdom, and the Israelites to get free of their taxes; but God was bringing about his own purposes. So will he over-rule the schemes of the politicians of every age, and all the ferments of the people, to promote, one way or other, his own cause. *There be many devices in the heart of man; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.*

5. However the commands of God may cross our inclinations, or injure our present interest, it is our wisdom and duty to obey them. Thus Rehoboam and those who adhered to him did. When the prophet commanded them they desisted, though they might probably have succeeded; at least it would be brave and honourable to attempt it. It is dangerous work to be overtaken in any thing contrary to the commands or will of God; and they certainly consult their own happiness on the whole, who keep close to divine directions.

6. The conduct of the pious Israelites is highly commendable, in adhering to the Levites, when Jeroboam cast them out, 2 Chron. xi. 16. It was much to their honour that they were not carried away with the throng, did not join in Jeroboam's idolatry, but fled with their despised, persecuted ministers, to join in the pure worship of God at Jerusalem. Every pious Israelite thought himself obliged to own them, and stand by them. All who act thus, show a noble spirit; and may it continue among us and our posterity! Let *us stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free.*

CHAPTER XIII.

We have here the message of a prophet, delivered by divine direction; the unhappy manner in which he was seduced; the sentence which was passed upon him, and the execution of it; and an account of Jeroboam's continued wickedness.

1 AND, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD, *by divine command,* unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense, *on a feast day:* 2 And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, *whom Jeroboam hath despised and deserted,* Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee; *he shall slay the priests, and burn their bones, and thus defile the altar**. 3 And he gave a sign the same day, *as an evidence that the rest should be fulfilled in due time,*

* This he did about three hundred and sixty years after. See 2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16.

saying, This [is] the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that [are] upon it shall be poured out.

4 And it came to pass when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Beth-el, that he put forth his hand from the altar *to point him out*, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. 5 The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. *This probably was done by lightning, to denote God's displeasure, and as a demonstration of his supreme power.* 6 And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Entreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again; *beseech God to change his countenance, and look favourably upon me.* And the man of God, *to show that he had no ill-will, and came only for his reformation,* besought the LORD; and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as [it was] before.

7 And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward *. 8 And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: 9 For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, *have no communion with them, in detestation of their idolatry,* nor turn again by the same way that thou camest; *abhor even the way that led thee to the sight of such abominations:* 10 So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Beth-el †.

11 Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father ‡. 12 And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way

* Jeroboam discovers no change of heart. He would thank and reward the instrument, but shows no regard to God.

† The prophet might have urged a plausible excuse for staying, in hopes that he might have reformed Israel, and reclaimed the king while under the impression of this miracle; and that his presence and exhortations might turn to some good account: but all was given up, when the command of God was otherwise.

‡ Josephus says this was a false prophet; he was probably educated in the schools of the prophets under Samuel, or some other tutor, but fell in with Jeroboam's idolatry. He is not called *a man of God*, and it is plain his sons were at the idolatrous feast.

the man of God went, which came from Judah. 13 And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass; and he rode thereon, 14 And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak, *tired with his journey and hungry, so that he would more easily hearken to the temptation:* and he said unto him, [Art] thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I [am.] 15 Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. 16 And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread, nor drink water with thee in this place: 17 For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread, nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest, *I cannot therefore comply with thy request. Then, pretending a revelation to countermand the former,* 18 He said unto him, I [am] a prophet also as thou [art;] and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. [But] he lied unto him. 19 So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water; *his weariness and hunger urged the request, and inclined him to yield to such plausible reasons*.*

20 And it came to pass as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back†: 21 And he cried unto the man of God, that came from Judah, saying, *perhaps in great agony at his own guilt and the injury he had done his guest, though the message was agreeable enough to his envious temper,* Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, 22 But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which [the LORD] did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers; *thou shalt not be buried among the Jews, which was reckoned a mark of infamy.* 23 And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, [to wit,] for the prophet whom he had

* Some suppose that this was not done with any evil design, but out of curiosity; I rather think the contrary. He was afraid lest a prophet from Judah should eclipse his reputation, and therefore he endeavoured to throw a blot upon him by leading him to act contrary to the commands of God; it is evident his sons were idolaters and he a liar. He knew what had passed at the altar, and therefore could not act on a good or innocent principle.

† God would not vouchsafe the true prophet a revelation, as he had acted contrary to that he had received. He thought fit to prophesy by this wicked man, as he did by Balaam, and thus obliged him to accuse himself of lying.

brought back. 24 And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcass was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcass. 25 And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcass cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcass: and they came and told [it] in the city where the old prophet dwelt, *as a wonderful event* *.

26 And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard [thereof,] he said, It [is] the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him. 27 And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled [him.] 28 And he went and found his carcass cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcass: the lion had not eaten the carcass, nor torn the ass. 29 And the prophet took up the carcass of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him †. 30 And he laid his carcass in his own grave; and they mourned over him, [saying,] Alas, my brother! *This was a usual form of lamentation; but we might hope it had a good effect upon him, and led him to repentance.* 31 And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God [is] buried; lay my bones beside his bones, *out of regard to him, and security to himself, that his bones might not be burned as was threatened,* ver. 22. 32 For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Beth-el, and against all the houses of the high places which [are] in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.

33 After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way; *all these miracles had no effect on him; perhaps the death of the messenger hardened him; though it might have been expected to*

* There were many things remarkable in this. That the lion should slay him, and not tear him, nor destroy the ass nor the passengers. That the ass should stay quietly, and the lion to guard the carcass. This was a proof to all who went by, that this was not a casual but a very extraordinary event, an awful providence, and a necessary act of severity. Had not God punished him thus, the Israelites would have been hardened in their idolatry, and have concluded that he was a false prophet, because he had eaten and drank contrary to the divine command. His death gave authority to his message. If God spared not a good man, when thus sinning, with so many fair excuses, how should he spare the presumptuous idolaters? His punishment was only a temporal death; God might pardon and accept him in another world.

† In 2 Kings xxiii. 17., we find there was a large and remarkable inscription set over him, which kept up the memory of the prophecy, and the expectation of the event.

produce a contrary effect: but *he* made again of the lowest of the people, priests of the high places, *without any regard to tribe, character, or condition:* whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became [one] of the priests of the high places. 34 And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut [it] off, and to destroy [it] from off the face of the earth, *which was fulfilled,* chap. xv. 29, 30.

REFLECTIONS.

1. From the instance related in this chapter, we are taught to adore the comprehensive view which God has of the most uncertain future events. What is more contingent or uncertain than children's names! Yet he whom God promised to raise up from the house of David, so many years before he was born, is called Josiah. Let us reverence him who is a God of knowledge, and to whom are known all his works from the foundation of the world.

2. See how soon and how easily God can blast persecuting powers, and disable their cruel hands. Jeroboam's hand withered in a moment, so that he could not draw it back. We have little reason to be afraid of man, when we are employed in the cause of God, who can at once disable and confound his proudest enemies.

3. It well becomes God's prophets resolutely and faithfully to adhere to his directions. Not to fear the face of man, but speak all he commands them, keeping close to his injunctions, and resolutely abiding by what he requires. May this be the temper and practice of all God's prophets!

4. Good men are in great danger of being seduced by pretenders to sanctity and divine revelation. This was the case here. He did not suspect a person who pretended to be a prophet and to have divine revelation. So many are led into erroneous notions, and sinful practices, by artful men, pretending uncommon zeal, and extraordinary illuminations. There are some instances of this in the present day; therefore *believe not every spirit, but try the spirits. Beware of false prophets.* His fault was credulity, in giving credit to a message which was contrary to what God had declared, without sufficient evidence that it came from him. Let us learn not to regard what men say in religious matters without evidence; especially when they make

extraordinary pretences to divine illuminations and inspirations. There is great reason to suspect such. *The simple believe, and are punished;* but wise men are cautious. *Be not children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine,* and *cunning men, who lie in wait to deceive.*

5. God sees the sins of his people with great displeasure. He was angry at this good prophet and animadverted on his misbehaviour. Not even his profession of pure religion, his office as a prophet, his good character, or good services, could secure him from God's anger. This is an important caution to all to be afraid of sin; for should we escape the wrath to come, yet some dreadful anguish of spirit, or temporal calamity, may overtake us here.

6. Let us learn not to judge of men by afflictions or prosperity. One would have thought this wicked prophet would have been destroyed rather than the other. But he escaped the lion; he was to die a natural death, while the other was slain. *God's judgments are a great deep.* We do not know good or evil, nor men's real characters; it is therefore folly and presumption for us to judge of them by their external circumstances. *Judge nothing before the time.*

7. We learn, that the motions of beasts are under divine direction. The lion never attacks but when he is exceedingly hungry, and is particularly fond of the flesh of asses; therefore God's providence was remarkable in the instance before us. He directs their steps, changes their instincts, and all to serve his own purposes. The faithful servants of God shall be at league with the beasts of the field; while he defends them, no lion or wild beast shall destroy them. But if God is our enemy, he can make tame ones instruments of our destruction.

8. Let us lament the terrible obstinacy of sinners, and the little effect which divine judgments have upon them. Jeroboam and his idolatrous priests were not affected by this wonderful scene. Vice, especially idolatry, besots men, and takes away their hearts. May we guard against declension from God, against the first step in an ill way, before our hearts be hardened, and judgments or deliverances make no impression. The grand lesson from the whole is, *to fear God, and keep his commandments;* for *sin will always bring bitterness in the end.*

CHAPTER XIV.

The sickness and death of Jeroboam's son, and the doom of his kingdom foretold; and Rehoboam's trouble and death.

1 AT that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. *He was the eldest son, and heir apparent.* 2 And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there [is] Ahijah the prophet, which told me that [I should be] king over this people*. 3 And *Jeroboam said,* Take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, *a sort of hard cakes or buns,* and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child. *He does not desire his prayers, though he had seen how prevalent the prayers of a prophet had been in his own case.* 4 And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age; *his sight was gone, but still he had the visions of the Lord.*

5 And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he [is] sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself [to be] another [woman.] 6 And it was [so,] when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself [to be] another? for I [am] sent to thee [with] heavy [tidings.] *He intimates his knowledge of her person, that she might give greater credit to the message; yet addresses her like a prophet, not like a courtier.* 7 Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, *raised thee from a private station,* and made thee prince over my people Israel, 8 And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and [yet]

* He could not trust either the gods or the priests he had made; but chose his wife to be the messenger, that she might bring him a faithful report. She was to disguise herself that the prophet might speak freely and indifferently to her; and that it might not be known publicly that he paid so much respect to a prophet of Judah, lest it should lessen the people's zeal for the calves. He might also fear lest the prophet should send him a reproof. On the whole, it showed great stupidity to think he could deceive a prophet, who foretold future events, and had warned him of idolatry.

thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do [that] only [which was] right in mine eyes; *hast not observed the orders that were given thee nor kept from idolatry, as David did;* 9 But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back; *neglected me, and treated my service with contempt:* 10 Therefore, behold, I will bring evil, *universal destruction,* upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, [and] him that is shut up and left in Israel, *shut up at home in places of security, or left in the country,* and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone, *leaving none, because of the loathsomeness of it,* ch. xv. 29. 11 Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat, *none shall be buried; and the decree is irrevocable,* for the LORD hath spoken [it.] 12 Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: [and] *as a sign of the truth of this prophecy,* when thy feet enter into the city, *when thou art gone but a little way in the city, even as far as to the threshold of the king's door,* (v. 17.), the child shall die. 13 And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found [some] good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam*. 14 Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, *Baasha,* who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? *when shall this come to pass?* even now, *very quickly; it is as sure as if it were even now done.* 15 For the LORD shall smite Israel, *for consenting or joining in idolatry,* as a reed is shaken in the water, *there shall be perpetual commotions or civil wars,* and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, *and new families shall take the throne,* and shall scatter them beyond the river *Euphrates,* because they have made their groves, *in which they placed the images of their gods,* provoking the LORD to anger. 16 And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin *by his authority and example.*

* Abijah disliked the worship of the calves, and intended to remove them when it was in his power, and allow the people to go to Jerusalem. The Jews say, that he broke down an hedge, or fence, which his father had made to prevent their going to the feast at Jerusalem.

17 And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah*: [and] when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died; 18 And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet. *There was a general mourning, which confirmed what the prophet had denounced, and was a sign that the rest of the threatening should be fulfilled in due time.*

19 And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they [are] written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel; *not in the Chronicles of our Bible, but in their civil records.* 20 And the days which Jeroboam reigned [were] two and twenty years: and he slept with his fathers†, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

21 And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam [was] forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. And his mother's name [was] Naamah an Ammonitess. 22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done, *more than in the time of the judges.* 23 For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree‡. 24 And there were also sodomites in the land: [and] they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

25 And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, [that] Shishak (ch. xi. 40.) king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem§: 26 And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had

* Shechem was the royal city at first, but Tirzah was a beautiful place, where Jeroboam kept his court.

† We read, in 2 Chron. xiii. 20., that the Lord struck him with some violent, painful disease, or grievous accident, so that he died under the apparent displeasure of God.

‡ They built temples, or little edifices, about their images, sometimes called groves by heathen writers, because they were originally worshipped in groves.

§ Rehoboam met with a speedy punishment for his revolt; he adhered to the worship of God three years, in the fourth he committed abominations, in the fifth Shishak came. In 2 Chron. xii. 2., it is said Shishak had twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand horsemen, and foot-soldiers without number, and he took Jerusalem without opposition.

made. 27 And king Rehoboam made in their stead brasen shields, *to keep up the appearance of dignity*, and committed [them] unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house. 28 And it was [so,] when the king went in to the house of the LORD, *for he still went there on some great occasions*, that the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber*.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 30 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all [their] days. 31 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother's name [was] Naamah an Ammonitess; *his mother's name is mentioned again, to intimate that he behaved like the son of an Ammonite rather than an Israelite.* And Abijam his son reigned in his stead.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How horrid is it for those who have known God, to be easy in their sins! Jeroboam, when his child was sick, despised his gods and his priests. Nothing satisfied him but applying to a good prophet. So, when men forsake their duty, and run into sin, they are in want of true satisfaction and comfort, and despise the lusts and pleasures which they serve, and the company they have kept, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

2. God's own people are liable to the infirmities of age as well as others. The good prophet was incurably blind. It is the case of many good men; they lose a valuable sense, and are deprived of many of the comforts of life. But they patiently submit, and so have manifestations of God, and the light of his countenance, which is better than all earthly enjoyments.

3. How vain is all dissimulation when God is concerned. What folly in Jeroboam to send his wife in disguise, as if the prophet that could know the event of the child's distemper, could not know whose wife she was. Thus do sinners impose upon themselves. They say, *How doth God know?* and think to hide them-

* It is surprising that the king of Egypt did not quite destroy Jerusalem, and make them captive: but the hand of the Lord was in it, because they humbled themselves before God, see 2 Chron. xii, 4—8. They became tributary to Shishak, and suffered many hardships, to show them their sin and folly.

selves from him; but they will be discovered and disappointed. He sees them in their true colours, and judges them by what they are, and not by what they seem to be; he will say to such, *Go out, thou false hypocrite, why feignest thou to be another?* Heavy tidings indeed, when the mask is pulled off, and secret wickedness exposed to all the world! These shall have their portion where the greatest misery is.

4. God remembers all the favours he hath bestowed upon us, though we may forget them. He reminds Jeroboam of this; all are registered in the book of his remembrance. Let us not forget his benefits, but improve them; for he will call them over another day to our shame, to show the justice of our sentence, and increase our condemnation.

5. It is peculiarly honourable in itself, and pleasing to God, to be good in a wicked family and age as Abijah was. This is a lesson to all young persons, *there was some good thing in him;* amidst the temptations of a wicked court he kept his integrity. God takes notice of every good thing, every good intention, or hopeful beginning. Let this be a motive to all young people, amidst the abounding wickedness of the rising generation, to fear God, and keep themselves uncorrupted. It will be greatly to their honour; and while they do thus, they will have a peculiar blessing from God, and favour with men.

6. Early, and what we call immature, death, is often a mercy to the persons removed. So Abijah was taken away before all the evil came on his family and on Israel. We do not see into futurity, and therefore think their death unseasonable; but most probably it is otherwise. This is a strong motive for patience and submission to the will of God, who always removes his servants at the best and fittest time.

7. We see the wisdom of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God. 2 Chron. xii. 7., *And the Lord said, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them.* A proper pattern for us. The design of afflictions is to bring us to consideration and repentance. May we acknowledge, with these people, that *the Lord is righteous,* and we have sinned, and deserve all and much more than we suffer. Then will God appear and be gracious. When afflictions have done their work, they will be removed, or their property altered, and will appear merciful dispensations. Let *us humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and* in due time *we shall be exalted.* Once more,

8. It is just and kind in God to give men over to the conse-

quences of vice and folly, that they may know the difference between them and religion. 2 Chron. xii. 8. They complained of the strictness of religion, and the rigour of the Mosaic law; let them try if they like the attack, and plundering, and usurpation of the king of Egypt better. So God suffers men to feel the consequences of intemperance, impiety, and irreligion, by their bodies being weakened, their substance wasted, the loss of their reputation, and their consciences being wounded; that they may see what a foolish choice they have made, in preferring the service of the devil to that of God. For if that was a thousand times harder than it is, yet is it worth while to attend to it, for *the way of transgressors is harder*. Let those whose iniquities correct them know and see, that *it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God;* and say, as in Hosea ii. 7., *I will go and return unto my God, for then was it better with me than now.*

CHAPTER XV.

☞ A larger account of these matters will be found in 2 Chron. xiii.—xvi., which should be read before this chapter.

An account of Abijam's wicked reign; Asa succeedeth him; and, he dying, is succeeded by Jehoshaphat; and Baasha's wicked reign.

1 NOW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat reigned Abijam over Judah. 2 Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 3 And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. 4 Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: 5 Because David did [that which was] right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any [thing] that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. 6 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. 7 Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war

between Abijam and Jeroboam. 8 And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

9 And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. 10 And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 11 And Asa did [that which was] right in the eyes of the LORD, as [did] David his father. 12 And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. 13 And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from [being] queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burned [it] by the brook Kidron. 14 But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days. 15 And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into the house of the LORD, silver, and gold, and vessels.

16 And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. 17 And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 18 Then Asa took all the silver and the gold [that were] left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Ben-hadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 19 [There is] a league between me and thee, [and] between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. 20 So Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maacah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. 21 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard [thereof,] that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah. 22 Then king Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none [was] exempted; and they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah.

23 The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in

the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. 24 And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

25 And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years*. 26 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin; *though he had no doubt heard of the threatening sent by Ahijah, yet he worshipped the golden calves.*

27 And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which [belonged] to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon. 28 Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead. 29 And it came to pass, when he reigned, [that] he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite: 30 Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger. 31 Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 32 And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah, began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty and four years. 34 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin; *he was as bad as his predecessors, and did not cut off the family of Jeroboam because they were idolaters, but only to secure his own succession.*

* It was threatened to Israel, that it should be *as a reed shaken in the water;* and here we see it fulfilled; they had no less than seven kings during Asa's reign.

CHAPTER XVI.

For the transgressions of a land many are the princes thereof. This is illustrated in this chapter; where we have the wickedness and destruction of Baasha; the short reign of Zimri; the reign of Omri; and the beginning of the infamous reign of Ahab.

1 THEN the word of the LORD came to Jehu* the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, 2 Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, *by my providence raised thee from a mean state, and succeeded thy attempts against the kingdom;* and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam; *continued the practice of those idolatries for which Jeroboam and his family were ruined;* and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; 3 Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 4 Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat; *he shall perish like Jeroboam, die a violent death, and want an honourable burial.*

5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 6 So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah: and Elah his son reigned in his stead. 7 And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of the LORD against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, in provoking him to anger with *idols* the work of his hands†, in being like the house of Jeroboam; and because he killed him, *that is, Jeroboam's son; doing it to satisfy his own ambition, he was no better than a murderer.*

8 In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah two years. 9 And his servant Zimri, captain of half [his] chariots, conspired

* This prophet was the son of him who was employed to reprove Asa for his miscarriage.

† This is mentioned again, to show how faithfully and courageously the prophet executed his commission, and delivered this dreadful message.

against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of [his] house in Tirzah. *He was a debauched young fellow, indulging his pleasures while the army was in the field, which gave Zimri an opportunity to destroy him.* 10 And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead.

11 And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, [that] he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends, *who were likely to avenge his death.* 12 Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, 13 For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities*. 14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

15 In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people [were] encamped against Gibbethon, which [belonged] to the Philistines. *The Philistines had retaken it, and the Israelites now invaded it again.* 16 And the people [that were] encamped, *that is, all the army,* heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. 17 And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. 18 And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that *he was not able to defend himself, and that* the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, *the strongest part,* and *being afraid of some shameful punishment, and lest the treasury should fall into Omri's hands, he* burned the king's house over him with fire, and died, 19 For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did to make Israel to sin. *In this short reign he gave indications of an idolatrous disposition, and his resolution to continue it, perhaps by some public edict.* 20 Now the rest of the

* There was a remarkable similitude between the destruction of Baasha's family and Jeroboam's; the son of each reigned but about two years; they were both slain; there was no successor to either family; and both were slain while the same city was besieged.

acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, *that is, the means he used to bring about his conspiracy against the king his master,* [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

21 Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath to make him king; and half followed Omri. *The people not liking to have a king imposed upon them by the soldiers, there was a civil war, which lasted for some years, in which Tibni was slain.* 22 But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.

23 In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah, *while molested by Tibni.* 24 And, *the palace being burned,* he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, *about seven hundred pounds,* and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria, *which in time became the royal city of the ten tribes.* 25 But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that [were] before him. *He worshipped the calves, and made a strict and severe law to prevent any from going to Jerusalem, and to oblige his people to idolatry, see* Micah vi. 16. 26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. 30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that [were] before him. 31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians*, and *he* went

* She was an heathen princess, and it was contrary to the divine command to marry such, and she was an infamous woman; we read of her witchcraft and

and served Baal, and worshipped him *as his god, without any regard to Jehovah**. 32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house *or temple* of Baal which he had built in Samaria, *the royal city*. 33 And Ahab made a grove, *where he offered human sacrifices, and used many abominable rites;* and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

34 In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho, *as a seat of idolatrous worship, in contempt of the curse in* Joshua vi. 26., *and as an affront to Jehovah; but* he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest [son] Segub†, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE infer, that those who resemble others in their sins may expect to resemble them in their punishments. Jeroboam's and Baasha's families were like each other in their sins and in their ruin. How solicitous should we be to avoid those sins which have brought poverty, shame, and ruin upon other families, lest we should suffer like them. Let us take that general advice with regard to all wicked men, *Come out from among them; partake not of their sins, lest ye partake of their plagues.*

2. There is an awful warning to drunkards, in Elah and Zimri, *v.* 9. How easily may such become a prey to death, or injury, when they have no reason or power to help themselves. To how many dangerous accidents are such exposed! To sudden death, and everlasting destruction, to which it transmits them. *Take heed to yourselves* therefore, *lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day,* the awful day of judgment, *come upon you unawares.* We learn,

whoredoms, idolatries and persecutions of God's prophets in Rev. ii. 20. Persons, who seduced others to uncleanness and idolatry, were called by her name.

* Baal signifies *lord;* it was a name given to the sun, the idol of the Phœnicians, and afterwards to dead heroes and kings, whom they deified. Jeroboam kept up a regard to Jehovah, but worshipped him through the medium of the calves, chiefly out of policy; but Ahab was an idolater out of pure love to strange gods.

† His eldest son died when he laid the foundation, and his youngest when he had finished the gate; and the rest suddenly, while he was building; perhaps in the hurry of his work he did not mind the hand of Providence. This was four hundred and sixty years after the threatening, and should have taught the people to have believed God's threatening that he would root them out of the land if they were rebellious and idolatrous.

3. The presumptuous obstinacy of sinners, and the righteous judgments of God upon them. These kings would tread in the steps of their predecessors; each seemed solicitous to outdo the former in idolatry and wickedness. But the judgments of God followed them. We have a remarkable instance of it in Hiel; against whom the threatening was delivered almost five hundred years before. Not a word of God's shall fall to the ground. Let sinners hear and fear: and learn that God is not slack to execute vengeance, any more than to fulfil his promises. Though the Lord seems to delay, he has not forgotten his word; and sinners will, sooner or later, find a terrible reality in the judgments he has threatened. Let none therefore harden themselves against God, for *who ever hardened himself against him and prospered?*

CHAPTER XVII.

Having done for a while with the account of those wicked kings, we have now before us a more entertaining and instructive part of the sacred history. There never were worse princes in Israel, nor more prophets, than at this period; nor ever better or more eminent men, especially Elijah, who far exceeded any other: and thus God left them inexcusable in their wickedness. We have in this chapter Elijah's prophecy against Ahab; he is sent to Cherith, and there fed by ravens; he is sent to the widow of Zarephath, and raises the widow's son.

1 AND Elijah the Tishbite, [who was] of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, [As] the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word *.

2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook

* We have no account of the parentage of Elijah; his name signifies *my God Jehovah is he.* The rabbies connect the chapters thus; Ahab would not believe that the punishment of Hiel in the close of the last chapter came from God; but attributed it to chance, and said, The law that threatened idolatry was not to be regarded, especially that in Deuteronomy xi. 17. Elijah having prayed that God would punish this idolatrous people in some extraordinary manner, to bring them to repentance, and finding the prophetic impulse on his own mind, went to Ahab with this denunciation, declaring there should be no rain till they heard further from him. This was an intimation, that if they reformed, God would, upon his prayers, remove the calamity.

Cherith, that [is] before Jordan*. 4 And it shall be, [that] thou shalt drink of the brook, *near the cave where he concealed himself;* and I have commanded the ravens† to feed thee there. 5 So he went, and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that [is] before Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook‡. 7 And it came to pass after a while, *in the Hebrew, at the end of days, or the year,* that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land; *this was a new trial of his faith.*

8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which [belongeth] to Zidon, *out of the boundaries of Israel,* and dwell there: behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee §. 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman [was] there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11 And as she was going to fetch [it,] he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12 And she said, [As] the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I [am] gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die; *the famine is sore among us, and it may possibly be the last food we shall ever eat, as we can see no likely means of any further supply.* 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go, [and] do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring [it] unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day

* Ahab sought to slay him, chap. xviii. 10., but probably not before the famine came; till then he disregarded him.

† Some would render it, *the people of Oreb;* others, *the Arabians;* but the word properly signifies *ravens;* and their coming daily to him, confutes the former notion.

‡ God chose to display his power in thus feeding the prophet, or he might have been hid and fed by Obadiah, or some other who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But God caused ravens, those birds of prey, to leave their nests and young ones to feed his servant. They brought bread and flesh, produced by the power of God, twice a day; which was enough to support nature, though not sufficient to encourage luxury.

§ He was not sent to any of the rich or great men in Zidon, but to a poor widow, who was probably a proselyte to the Jewish religion. Jezebel came from this place, and brought the worship of Baal from hence. It must have been a mortification to her when she knew that the prophet was maintained there.

[that] the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth*. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat [many] days. 16 [And] the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah†.

17 And it came to pass after these things, [that] the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. 18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son‡? 19 And, *though Elijah was naturally of a warm temper, yet considering the affliction of the woman, and the worth of her character, he excused this sally of immoderate passion, and with great meekness* he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed: *hence it appears it was a young child.* 20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn by slaying her son§? 21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him

* This he said to try her faith and obedience. She might have possibly pleaded, that she must sustain herself and her son first; that she had none to spare; that charity begins at home; that if he was a prophet he might work a miracle, and so provide for himself. But her faith silences all these objections, and therefore was almost as miraculous as the supply itself.

† It was according to her faith; it lasted them for two years; what was taken out was immediately supplied by the divine power. Thus God, who sent his prophet to board with her, paid well for his table; and sent food for her family, while her neighbours were starving; and what was better, she had the good company and instructions of the prophet. With how much wonder and thankfulness would she look on her barrel and cruse every day, and acknowledge that the finger of God was there.

‡ She was thrown into great perturbation and agony of spirit on account of her son's sickness, and spoke in an hasty, passionate manner. It was a part of wisdom to know that afflictions were a punishment for sin; but it was weakness to charge it upon the prophet, who had saved her and her child from death. She takes it for granted that Elijah by his prophetic spirit had discovered some of the sins of her former life, and thought it hard to have no better return for his entertainment, than to be punished so awfully, in so tender a part.

§ Every word here is emphatical. Thou art my God; this is a poor widow; this is her only son; the affliction is upon me, as I am in the house; it will be a reflection on thy prophets, as if they were impotent, or ungrateful, and brought mischief wherever they came. The faith of this prayer is astonishing, as it seems to be an unexampled thing, there is no instance of it ever before.

down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother, *no doubt with great joy, as a favour to him and the poor widow;* and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth; *see how much mercy, instead of severe justice, thou hast found on my account.* 24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou [art] a man of God, [and] that the word of the LORD in thy mouth [is] truth *.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have here an instance of the great efficacy of fervent prayer. James v. 17., Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are; and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and *it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. The fervent prayer of this righteous man availed much,* not only stopped the windows of heaven, but raised the widow's son to life. But the general truth it suggests is, that *God is near to the souls that seek him, and his ear is ever open to their cry.*

2. We have here undoubted proof of God's command over all creatures. He uses them in judgment or mercy as he pleases; so he did the ravens. Of all birds, these we might have thought were the most unlikely to execute such a commission. Yet God overcame their instinct, directed their motions, and made them constant in bringing their supplies to the prophet. Who would not trust him in the greatest straits! He can provide tables in the wilderness; ravens shall become purveyors and servitors, rather than his prophets shall be starved or injured.

3. We learn to be liberal even of a little. If God has given us but little, let us be ready to do good to others; to let them share with us. Water was at that time a scarce commodity; yet the poor widow, in her great necessity, was ready to relieve a stranger. Those who are in low circumstances have no excuse for being uncharitable. Let every one give of his little. Even *a cup of cold water shall not lose its reward.*

4. We should learn, when Providence is most remarkably kind, to prepare for rebukes and trials. This woman was happy in a

* She was undoubtedly transported with joy. She believed he was a prophet before, and called him a man of God, in v. 18., but the death of her child made her doubt. This miracle, however, confirmed her faith, and made her regard all his instructions. It was probably intended as a remarkable proof of the resurrection and the existence of the soul in a separate state; thereby to encourage the righteous, and revive religion when it was at so low an ebb.

constant supply of food, in the society, instructions and prayers of the prophet, and then her son died. We should never think our mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved. Let us consider this as a changing world, and use relations and comforts as though we had them not; sitting loose to all, for *the fashion of this world passeth away.*

5. Let us improve our afflictions as seasons for reflecting on our sin. The design of affliction is to call sin to remembrance, to imbitter it to us, and increase our hatred of it. May we labour to improve it to this purpose; then we shall not suffer in vain. *It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more,* Job xxxiv. 31.

6. Let us think of the joy with which saints shall be restored at the general resurrection, when all eyes shall be fixed on Christ, by whom the great work shall be accomplished. With what rapture did the widow receive her son! With what respect and joy did she look upon Elijah! So saints, especially relations and acquaintance, shall meet one another above, and be joined in their complete persons at the resurrection; they shall adore the power and grace that produced the change, shall see all the words of the Lord accomplished, and Jesus appearing as the faithful and true witness.

7. When God's own people are rebellious and disobedient, he confers their privileges upon strangers. Our Lord's own reflection is illustrated by this story, Luke iv. 25., *But I tell you of a truth many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.* God punishes people for their obstinacy and unbelief, by taking away their privileges, and transferring them to strangers, if they do not value and improve them. May we of this nation consider such awful dispensations, lest the gospel be taken from us, and sent to a nation that will make a better improvement of it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Elijah's interview with Obadiah and Ahab, and Baal's prophets; and the removal of the calamity by obtaining rain.

1 AND it came to pass [after] many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year *of his flight* saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab, *acquaint him with the cause of the calamity,* and *exhort him to remove it, then* I will send rain upon the earth. 2 And Elijah went *boldly* to show himself unto Ahab. And [there was] a sore famine in Samaria, *which might have provoked Ahab the more to destroy him.*

3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which [was] the governor of [his] house. Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly; *he was a good man, who did not worship Baal; but Ahab connived at it, because he was a faithful servant:* 4 For it was [so,] when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, *or students, who were preachers of righteousness, and some of them occasionally inspired,* and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water. 5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks, *where grass was most likely to be found:* peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts, *many of which were dead already.* 6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself; *he would trust none but himself and Obadiah, lest others, by presents or entreaties, might conceal grass or food.*

7 And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, *showing him the greatest respect,* and said, [Art] thou that my lord Elijah? *This was a strange word from the lord high steward of Israel to a poor prophet.* 8 And he answered him, I [am:] go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah [is here.] 9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me? *It will be at the hazard of my life to give him this information.* 10 [As] the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee, *to bring thee back to revoke the sentence:* and when they said, [He is] not

[there;] he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. 11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah [is here.] 12 And it shall come to pass, [as soon as] I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not*; and [so] when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me *because I did not secure thee when thou wast in my power:* but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth; *I have not been like the rest of the courtiers, and therefore hope thou wilt be concerned for my safety:* 13 Was it not told my lord, what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? 14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah [is here:] and he shall slay me. 15 And Elijah said, [As] the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, *and whose servant I am,* I will surely show myself unto him to-day. 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, *not doubting but God would preserve him,* and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, [Art] thou he that troubleth Israel? *He begins furiously, and charges him with bringing these calamities upon Israel, under colour of being a prophet and a friend.* 18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim; *thy sins are the cause of all the judgments that are come upon the nation.* 19 Now therefore *let us bring the matter to a fair trial, and see who are the troublers of Israel, and in order to this* send, [and] gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table†. 20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, *the princes and elders,* and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? *like lame men who tread dubiously and not firmly?* If the LORD [be] God, follow him: but if Baal, [then] follow him; *there can be but one supreme, all-perfect God; see which that is, and renounce the other competitors.* And the people answered him not a word; *they knew not what to say, and*

* Perhaps this was sometimes the case, when Ahab and Jezebel hunted him.

† Astarte, or the moon, was the goddess of the Sidonians, for whose priests Jezebel kept a table, and they were her domestic chaplains.

were ashamed that they were not able to answer in so plain a case. 22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, [even] I only, remain a prophet of the LORD, *publicly to own and plead the cause of God;* but Baal's prophets [are] four hundred and fifty men, *and have all external aids on their sides.* 23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay [it] on wood, and put no fire [under:] and I will dress the other bullock, and lay [it] on wood, and put no fire [under:] 24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress [it] first; for ye [are] many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire [under*.] 26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed [it,] and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, *when the sun was in its greatest strength,* saying, O Baal, hear us. But [there was] no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made; *kept leaping and dancing round the altar. This was common among the worshippers of the sun, as that they believed put all things into motion.* 27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he [is] a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, [or] peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked†. 28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29 And it came to pass, when mid-day was past, and they prophesied, *that is, prayed and sung hymns in honour of Baal,* until the [time] of the offering of the [evening] sacrifice, *till three o'clock in the afternoon;* that [there was] neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded; *all was in vain.*

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the

* Elijah being a single man, gives them the preference; and besides, if Jehovah had answered first, Baal's prophets might have formed some excuse for not answering; above all, their disappointment would make his success the more remarkable.

† He said this, to rouse them out of their stupidity, and convince the people of the folly of idolatry. As if he had said, Your god is a little deaf; or he is busy about some despatches, or in travelling to some place, where you must send after him; or he has a narrow capacity, and cannot attend to two things at once therefore cry again, perhaps he is asleep, make more noise.

altar of the LORD [that was] broken down*. 31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, *to shew that he worshipped the God of the patriarchs, and was concerned for the happiness of Israel,* unto whom the word of the LORD came *when his family was purged from idolatry,* saying, Israel shall be thy name: 32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid [him] on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water *from the sea, which was at the foot of mount Carmel,* (Jer. xlvi. 18.,) and pour [it] on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood, *that they may see there is no cheat.* 34 And he said, Do [it] the second time. And they did [it] the second time. And he said, Do [it] the third time. And they did [it] the third time. 35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. 36 And it came to pass, at [the time of] the offering of the [evening] sacrifice, *when the people of God were worshipping at Jerusalem,* that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou [art] God in Israel, and [that] I [am] thy servant, and [that] I have done all these things at thy word, *have brought the famine by thy command.* 37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou [art] the LORD God, and [that] thou hast turned their heart back again; *wrought this miracle to reduce them from idolatry to thy own service. This was a short prayer, offered from a calm mind, and not, like Baal's priests, in a fury.* 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that [was] in the trench. *It had a remarkable effect, parching the ground and consuming the stones. Elijah's God was not talking, or pursuing, or sleeping; he heard and answered immediately.* 39 And when all the people saw [it,] they fell on their faces; and they said, The LORD, he [is] the God; the LORD, he [is] the God; *they were struck into consternation, the case was so plain; and were deeply affected with this demonstration of Jehovah's divinity.* 40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook

* The worshippers of Baal had broken down God's altar, and set up one to Baal in its stead; but Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord, to intimate that he intended to restore the worship of the true God again.

Kishon, and slew them there; *and Ahab was so impressed that he durst not oppose it, more especially, as it was the way to have rain.*

41 And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, *that is, from the brook where the priests were slain, to his tent on the side of the hill,* eat and drink, *take refreshment (having fasted till evening, waiting the event of the trial),* for [there is] a sound of abundance of rain. 42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, *in an humble posture, to seek God's continued interposition,* 43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, [There is] nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. 44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare [thy chariot,] and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not, *lest it swell the brooks, and make the way impassable.* 45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel, *where he had a palace.* 46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, *his long garment, that it might not hinder him**, and *he* ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel, *but did not choose to go in for fear of Jezebel.*

REFLECTIONS.

1 SEE the power of divine grace in securing Obadiah's goodness in this dangerous place. Though surrounded with so many temptations, he kept his integrity. Blessed be God, some such extraordinary instances are still to be found.

2. They that fear the LORD in their youth, come to fear him greatly. So Obadiah. He began betimes, and made great progress in piety, zeal and hospitality. Early piety becomes eminent piety. This is a motive to young persons to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

3. We infer, that sinners, not reformers, are the troublers of Israel. Useful, zealous reformers are often called so: Christ and his apostles were said to turn the world upside down. Elijah

* God gave Elijah extraordinary strength to run before Ahab, to show his respect to the king, and that all Israel might see that the glory of this miracle had not made him proud or insolent.

was really the best guard to Israel; better than chariots and horsemen. Sin is a great disturber of families, churches, towns, and kingdoms, and the whole world. All mischief is owing to it. Therefore let us keep from even the appearance of evil.

4. We may in general judge how men stand affected to God, by the manner in which they treat his ministers. Observe the difference between Ahab and his steward. The one was saucy and insolent, the other most polite and respectful. He that loves the master, loves the servants for the master's sake.

5. We are taught hence, resolution and steadiness in religion. Some worshipped Jehovah, to please the prophets; others Baal, to please Jezebel. This was shameful. Religion is every thing, or nothing. *No man can serve two masters. Double-minded men are unstable in all their ways;* their hearts are not right with God, therefore they are not sound in his statutes.

6. External pomp and grandeur is no sign of a true church. The papists make this a mark of it, but it is wrong. Many false prophets are well fed, while God's prophets may be hid in caves, and have only bread and water; but still the former are false ones, and God's prophets the only true ones. *Judge not from outward appearance.*

7. See the vanity of idolatry, and the power of God. Surely no idolatry ever made so contemptible a figure, or was so justly ridiculed. But how glorious does the God of Israel appear in the midst of this conquest, and in his power over all the elements. We have reason to say, *He is God;* and to be thankful for the light of the gospel, or we, like these prophets, shall be ashamed and confounded.

8. We are taught perseverance in prayer. Elijah sent his servant seven times, prostrated himself humbly, and continued instant in prayer. The Lord will at length come and will not tarry. Wait patiently for him; *he is a God who heareth prayer.*

9. Small beginnings often produce great and wonderful effects. A cloud no bigger than a man's hand covered the heavens. This is often applicable to feeble attempts of service, and the wonderful success of the gospel. Let us then encourage ourselves in God, and not despise the day of small things.

10. Those who are instruments of the greatest public good, should learn to behave themselves modestly and humbly. Elijah was not elated with this extraordinary triumph; he paid respect to Ahab, as a king, though he was a wicked man. Let all learn to know their place, and remember that humility is their brightest

ornament; adds the greatest lustre to wealth, honour, and usefulness, and recommends those who are possessed of it to the favour of God and man.

CHAPTER XIX.

An account of Elijah's flight from Jezebel into the wilderness; the extraordinary appearance of God to him; the directions he received; and his beginning to execute his commission.

1 AND Ahab, *to excuse himself, and throw the blame upon Elijah,* told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, *how he had brought fire from heaven, and rain upon earth,* and withal how he had slain all the prophets *of Baal* with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do [to me,] and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time*. 3 And when he saw [that,] he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which [belongeth] to Judah, *where Ahab had no power, and expected protection under Jehoshaphat,* and *he* left his servant there, *not willing to expose him to the hardships he might meet with.*

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness; *not thinking himself quite secure where he was, he went into that wilderness where the Israelites had so long wandered,* and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I [am] not better than my fathers; *I think myself not capable to do any more for thee, and that I had better die: I have lived as long as my fathers, or, I can pretend to no virtues superior to theirs, which may entitle me to the rewards of a longer life. But God had more work for him to do.* 5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise [and] eat. 6 And he looked, and behold, [there was] a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

* Instead of falling under conviction, as might have been expected, she was transported into a violent rage; and so infatuated by her passion, as to send a message to him; some think with an intent to affright him, and make him get out of the way, she being afraid of the people after these miracles.

7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise [and] eat; because the journey [is] too great for thee *without extraordinary strength, considering thy age.*

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God*. 9 And he came thither unto a cave, (Exodus xxxiii. 21, 22.), and lodged there†; and, behold, the word of the LORD [came] to him, *by the ministration of an angel,* and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? *is this thy proper place and station? canst thou do me any service here? This was a secret reproof for his flight.* 10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts; *it is not out of indifference to his cause, or for want of zeal, but all is to no purpose:* for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, [even] I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away; *there is no one left to stand by me, and they are seeking my life; I despair therefore of doing any good, and this is the cause of my flight.* 11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD, *that I may give thee some extraordinary token of my presence with thee.* And, behold, the LORD passed by, *there was the appearance of the Shekinah, or glory of the Lord,* and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; [but] the LORD [was] not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; [but] the LORD [was] not in the earthquake: 12 And after the earthquake a fire; [but] the LORD [was] not in the fire‡: and after the fire a still small voice. 13 And it was [so,] when Elijah heard [it,] *the distinct and gentle voice of God speaking to him,* that he wrapped his face in his mantle, *to express his reverence,* and, *not daring to look on the divine glory, he* went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, [there came] a voice unto him, and said, What doest

* It was but a journey of four or five days; but he went through by-ways for fear of being pursued, and took time to rest in different places.

† Probably this was the cave in which Moses was hid; here he seemed to take up his abode, and indulge his melancholy.

‡ According to the accounts we have of volcanoes and fiery eruptions, this appearance was exactly the operation of nature on such occasions. There was a violent storm of wind, then an earthquake, and then fire broke out; nature was suffered to do its office without interruption. God was in the still small voice which followed this dreadful procession. This was intended to usher in the Shekinah, and prepare the prophet's mind for the instructions of the great Author of nature.

thou here, Elijah? *repeating the former question, to which he returned the same answer.* 14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, [even] I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away. 15 And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael [to be] king over Syria, *by whom I will punish this idolatrous and obstinate people:* 16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint [to be] king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, shalt thou anoint [to be] prophet in thy room; *or thou shalt take care that they be anointed.* 17 And it shall come to pass, [that] him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay*. 18 Yet I have left [me] seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. *This was designed to encourage him; though Israel was degenerate, it was not so bad as he imagined; there were seven thousand who had not worshipped idols, and were ready to second his attempts and declare against idolatry; this gave him fresh vigour.*

19 So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who [was] ploughing [with] twelve yoke [of oxen] before him, and he with the twelfth, *being a great farmer, and a man of considerable wealth:* and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him, *his prophetic habit, which was a kind of inauguration into the office.* 20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and [then] I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? *there is nothing in such a ceremony to incline thee to follow me, that instigation is from an higher power. Or rather, what I have done need be no hinderance to a decent and prudent regard to thy relations and worldly affairs,* Luke v. 29. 21 And he returned back from him, *to take a friendly farewell of his relations and servants; and in token of joy at his new calling,* and, *as a farewell feast to his family, he* took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people,

* These three in their turn were to bring judgments on the land; Hazael in battle, Jehu in destroying Jezebel and the idolatrous priests, and Elisha by denouncing divine judgments, slaying the children, and perhaps bringing a famine, 2 Kings vi. 24, &c.

and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him; *he was ready to serve him in a lower station, to pour water on his hands, till he was called out to extraordinary services as a prophet.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We hence learn, how incorrigible the hearts of sinners are under the most sensible demonstrations of the divine presence and power. We might have thought that Jezebel, bad as she was, could not have sent such a message to a prophet; especially after he had given such proofs of favour to her country by procuring rain. But nothing affected her mind. So sad a thing is a hard heart, and so difficult is it to be renewed and softened. So true it is, that God alone can *take away a heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh.*

2. Learn what need the best of men have to guard their hearts against irregular sallies; especially under ill usage for doing their duty. Behold the prophet under the juniper tree, pouring out impatient wishes that he may die! Let us lament the weakness of this excellent man. He that was so bold before Ahab, who raised the dead child, opened and shut heaven, and brought fire from above and rain on the earth, to fear the threats of a woman, and wish to die for fear of dying! *Is this then my lord Elijah?* A melancholy instance of what we are when left to ourselves. He was a man of like passions with us. May we learn therefore to guard our hearts, and to rule our spirits, for *this was written for our admonition.*

3. Let us so behave ourselves, as to be able to answer in the sight of God what business we have in the places where we are. *What doest thou here, Elijah?* It was a just and gentle reproof; is this a time for good men, for prophets, to retire, when their service is so much needed? Let us often put the question to ourselves, What if we should hear God's voice saying to us when at alehouses, assemblies, or in bad company, working or journeying on sabbath days, What doest thou here? how should we answer it? Let us often say to ourselves, Does God call me to this? Am I in the way of duty? Can I be useful here? Is this my proper place? In such instances let us act with holy caution and fear, remembering that we are accountable to God.

4. This appearance to Elijah, is an emblem of God's manner

of dealing with men in bringing them to himself. He is not in the wind, in an earthquake, &c., but by the terrors of the law, and alarms of conscience, he makes way for the gospel. In religious matters there is not always the greatest fervency and devotion, and the most of God where there is the greatest noise: God makes way for himself *by terrible things in righteousness.* But he speaks powerfully and sweetly to the heart in his *still small voice* of mercy and peace.

5. In times of great degeneracy there may be more good men than we think there are, reserved by God for himself. This is applicable to the present day. Rom. xi. 4, 5., *But what says the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* The great zeal of good men makes them overlook many; who are often ashamed to be seen when persecuted, reproached, and bantered; yet they may be more than we imagine. It is a comfort that God discerns them; *the Lord knoweth them that are his.* Let us rejoice in this, and take encouragement in our resolute attempts to promote religion. If we stand up for God, others may join us, or at least thousands may pray for us.

6. See how effectually God can stir up men to undertake his work, even amidst great discouragements. Behold how readily Elisha goes after Elijah. If he had consulted flesh and blood he would have been very unwilling to be in Elijah's situation, when thus hunted, in these dangerous times, when there was nothing to be expected but persecution. Yet Elisha chose to be servant to a prophet, rather than master of a large farm; and cheerfully resigned all for God. The power of divine grace can conquer every prejudice, and remove every objection. Those are not worthy of God's service, who do not esteem it the highest honour and preferment; yet many decline it, especially in public characters, and particularly in degenerate days. When *the harvest is great, and the labourers are few,* this story should encourage our prayers to the Lord of the harvest, *that he would send more labourers into it.*

CHAPTER XX.

We hear nothing of Elijah in this or the next chapter; he was probably seeking out some of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and was founding and instructing some of the schools of the prophets. In this chapter is an account of Ben-hadad besieging Samaria; the defeat of his army by the Israelites; he renews the attack, and is again defeated; Ahab makes a foolish treaty with Ben-hadad, and is reproved for his folly.

1 AND Ben-hadad the king of Syria *(the son of Ben-hadad mentioned before)* gathered all his host together: and [there were] thirty and two kings with him, *petty kings who were tributary to him,* and horses and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it, *for what reason does not appear.* 2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, 3 Thus saith Ben-hadad, Thy silver and thy gold [is] mine; thy wives also and thy children, [even] the goodliest, [are] mine; *he expected every thing to be delivered at discretion.* 4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I [am] thine, and all that I have, *he was willing to become tributary to him if he would raise the siege.* 5 And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; 6 Yet I will send my servants unto thee tomorrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, [that] whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put [it] in their hand, and take [it] away*. 7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this [man] seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not. 8 And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not [unto him,] nor consent. 9 Wherefore he said unto the messengers of

* Finding Ahab so submissive, he enlarged his demands; and now he shall not only become his vassal, but he would take away his royal treasures, and the treasures of his subjects, and every valuable thing that Ahab was fond of, to mortify him.

Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first, I will do: but this thing I may not do, *I will stand to the first concession, and no more.* And the messengers departed, and brought him word again. 10 And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me; *he would bring such an army as would destroy the whole city, and carry away the dust of it; so many that there would be but an handful for every one.* 11 And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell [him,] Let not him that girdeth on [his harness] boast himself as he that putteth it off. *Ahab being encouraged by the zeal and unanimity of his council, sent him a very just reproof, not to triumph before he had gained the victory.* 12 And it came to pass, when [Ben-hadad] heard this message, as he [was] drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set [yourselves in array,] *he gives immediate orders to attack the city.* And they set [themselves in array] against the city.

13 And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, *it does not appear who he was, but he came boldly, not being afraid, as he had a good message,* saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? *probably he had been viewing them from the towers of Samaria;* behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I [am] the LORD, *that Jehovah, and not Baal, hath given thee the victory.* 14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, [Even] by the young men of the princes of the provinces, *that is, the pages and servants of the princes, young raw persons, who knew nothing of military affairs, who lived in ease and luxury, and therefore were very unfit for the business.* Then he said, Who shall order the battle, *who shall head them?* And he answered, Thou. *It was rather a mortifying circumstance to be the leader of so small an army.* 15 Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two, *these were to begin the assault:* and after them he numbered all the people, [even] all the children of Israel, [being] seven thousand; *these were all he could immediately muster to go in the rear; if the young men succeeded, these were to join in the pursuit.* 16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad [was] drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. 17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces, went out first; and Ben-hadad *hearing a bustle,* sent

out *to inquire the cause,* and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria, *a small party is coming out of the city.* 18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive; *he thought it beneath him to fight with so few, and therefore orders them to be taken alive.* 19 So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them; *they led the way, and the small army followed them.* 20 And they slew every one his man *who came to apprehend him:* and the Syrians fled, *being struck with a panic, supposing the army to be much greater than it was;* and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen. 21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter, *he totally routed them.*

22 And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest, *make the best preparation against another attack;* for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee. 23 And the servants of the king of Syria *came to consult with him about the next campaign, and* said unto him, Their gods [are] gods of the hills, *theirs is an hilly country,* therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they; *there our chariots and horses will be more useful, and their gods cannot help them.* 24 And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms: *the kings will not fight well as it is not for their own country: and they are too delicate and effeminate; your own experienced captains will obey orders and fight better.* 25 And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, [and] surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. 26 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek* to fight against Israel. 27 And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, *all they could get together,* and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country. 28 And there came a man of

* This was a fortified town, taken from the Israelites by Ben-hadad's father. Here they might secure a retreat, while they fought in the plain of Galilee, which lay near it.

God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD [is] God of the hills, but he [is] not God of the valleys: therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD, *the universal Lord of all places, persons and things**. 29 And they pitched one over against the other seven days *before the battle, because the Israelites were on a hill, and the Syrians waited till they came down.* And [so] it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. 30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city, *or over the wall of the city, to defend it;* and [there] a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men [that were] left†. And Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber, *in the Hebrew, into a chamber within a chamber, wh re he hid himself.*

31 And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel [are] merciful kings, *bear that character by the manner in which they treated their captives taken in former actions:* let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, *in token of sorrow,* and ropes upon our heads, *denoting the punishment they deserved, and that they were ready to surrender at discretion,* and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. 32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and [put] ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, [Is] he yet alive? he [is] my brother; *I am glad to hear he did not perish in battle; he is my brother as a king; not in religion, but in royalty.* 33 Now the men did diligently observe whether [any thing would come] from him, and did hastily catch [it;] *they watched for any word that might turn to their advantage;* and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. 34 And [Ben-hadad] said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore, *and thus make restitution for the damages done;* and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria; *he would become his vassal, allow him to build a*

* Here the honour of God was particularly concerned, lest he should be thought like the gods of the nations.

† Dr. Kennicott shows that the Hebrew word for wall may be justly rendered *a burning wind.* The rest fled into the city, and the burning wind fell upon twenty-seven thousand of the men that were left. So probably Sennacherib's army was destroyed, 2 Kings xix. 35, compared with ver. 7.

citadel, to keep the town in awe, streets to live in, and to carry on a free trade. Then [said Ahab,] I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away; *but he soon broke the covenant,* see ch. xxii. 2.

35 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets, *who was trained up in the college or academy* *, said unto his neighbour, *another of the sons of the prophets,* in the word of the LORD, *by the divine command,* Smite me, I pray thee, *that he might look like a wounded soldier.* And the man *thought it inhuman to do so, and* refused to smite him. 36 Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him †. 37 Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded [him.] 38 So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face; *his face was besmeared with blood and dirt.* 39 And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man, *a commander,* turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man *a prisoner:* if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. 40 And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So [shall] thy judgment [be;] thyself hast decided [it,] *it is no more than thou deservest for breach of orders: forgetting how he dismissed Ben-hadad willingly, while this was done unwillingly.* 41 And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he [was] of the prophets, *either by his habit and gesture, or some of his courtiers knew him.* 42 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of [thy] hand, a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, *because a blasphemer of the God of Israel* ‡, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for

* The Jews say it was Micaiah; and it is not unlikely, because Ahab said of him, that *he only prophesied evil.*

† This punishment was not too severe if we consider the manner in which he was commanded to smite him. Being a son of the prophets, he well knew the meaning of that solemn charge *in the name* or *in the word of the Lord.* It was also an intimation to Ahab, that if a prophet was not spared for refusing to smite an innocent man at the word of the Lord, how should he escape for sparing an impious and tyrannical king.

‡ Ahab might have particular orders to put him to death; or it was intimated when God declared, ver. 38, that he would deliver them into his hands. He should

his people*. 43 And the king of Israel went to his house, heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria; *this dreadful message from God, whose word he had found true, spoiled the joy of his victory.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. *Let not him that putteth on the armour boast himself as he that putteth it off.* Let not him who is preparing for action triumph before the victory. This was perhaps the wisest speech Ahab ever made. It teaches us all to be humble and diffident; to watch always against our spiritual enemies; and not be confident in our own strength, but mark and see what we are to do, and how we may best secure ourselves. *Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

2. Let us reflect on the strange turns which human affairs sometimes take. See what haughty airs Ben-hadad gave himself; *the dust of Samaria shall not suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me:* but now, *thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee let me live.* Hence we should learn not to be proud when in high stations, and not to despise the weak and poor, who are our inferiors. *We know not what will be on the morrow;* what changes are before us. Let us therefore not provoke or insult any one; but make as few enemies, and gain as many friends, as possible.

3. We should lament the ignorance and folly of these heathens. They had their topical gods; of different countries and different parts; gods of the trees, and valleys, and hills. While we are astonished at it, let us lament the corruption of human nature, and the prevalence of ignorance and superstition, which was so contrary to the principles of reason; and thank God that we enjoy the light of the gospel, which gives us better notions; *walk therefore as children of the light and of the day.*

4. The mercy of God to others should be a motive to be reconciled to him. Ben-hadad's servants plead that the king of Israel is a merciful king. The God of Israel is a merciful God. His mercy extends to great offenders, when penitent; and still he forgives *that he may be feared.* We should appear before him as penitents; with humility and submission

therefore have considered him as God's prisoner, and asked advice of the prophet how to dispose of him.

* Three years after this Ahab was slain in battle by a Syrian, and Hazael brought heavy punishments upon the people for their continued impiety and idolatry.

of soul; and earnestly beg the life of our souls. Those who are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by them, pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.

CHAPTER XXI.

In which we have Ahab's desire of Naboth's vineyard; Jezebel's stratagem to gain it; the terrible message Elijah was sent with to Ahab; and the effect it had upon him.

1 AND it came to pass after these things, *Ahab's success in the war and the reproof he had for sparing Ben-hadad, which aggravated his guilt,* [that] Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which [was] in Jezreel, *where Jezebel resided,* hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it [is] near unto mine house, *it lay on the hill where the palace stood,* and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; [or,] if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money*. 3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. 4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he *was so vexed at the disappointment, that he* laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread, *nor see company.*

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? 6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee [another] vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard†. 7 And Jezebel his wife said

* This was a fair proposal, had it been lawful for Naboth to have sold it; but the law of God forbade the Israelites to sell or alienate any ground, except in cases of extraordinary necessity, and then only till the year of jubile, Lev. xxv. 23. Naboth probably thought he should never have it again if he sold it to the king, and that his successors would not part with it.

† This was a false state of the case. He did not acquaint her with Naboth's reason, only intimates that he gave a short, surly answer; whereas he said, *I may not do it*: it is contrary to my duty and conscience.

unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, [and] eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite; *is it becoming thy dignity and power as a king, to lay to heart the denial of a subject? Show thyself an absolute prince, and seize upon it by force: fear not, I will procure it for thee. Ahab wanted neither wit nor wickedness, but he was a mere novice to Jezebel.* 8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed [them] with his seal, *his ring or signet, which could not be done without his consent;* and *this audacious woman* sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that [were] in his city, dwelling with Naboth. 9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people; *she attempts to alarm their fears and raise their indignation, as if some grievous crime had been committed, and some heavy calamity was coming: and, as if it was all done with a pious design, she proclaims a fast, and orders Naboth to be set on high, that every body might see him, and hear what was alleged against him, and what defence he would make:* 10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, *fellows of no conscience, who were ready to swear any thing for reward,* to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king*. And [then] carry him out, and stone him, that he may die. 11 And the men of his city, [even] the elders, and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, [and] as it [was] written in the letters which she had sent unto them†. 12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. 13 And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, [even] against Naboth, in the presence of the people saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. *Denying the king the vineyard, was not blaspheming him; pleading the authority of God's law for the refusal, was not blaspheming God. But so obsequious were these men to Jezebel, that they made no scruple to commit this great wickedness in order to condemn him.* Then they carried him forth out of the city, *to testify their desire that the wickedness might be removed, and the*

* They joined both God and the king in the accusation, that they might the better work on all sorts of people. If he blasphemed God, he would have been put to death, but his estate would not have been forfeited; but if God and the king, the Jews say, his house, goods, and estate were confiscated.

† It is astonishing that there was not one man of common honesty or humanity among them. But they were desirous to ingratiate themselves with Jezebel, who probably had sent a private message, with promises of great rewards. They might also hate so conscientious a man as Naboth, especially as he was a worshipper of Jehovah, and not of Baal.

city not polluted; and stoned him with stones, that he died. *In* 2 Kings ix. 26, *it is said that his sons also were stoned, that none might be left to claim the vineyard.* 14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead; *she heard this with a malicious pleasure.*

15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead; *thou wouldst have given him money, but I have found out a way to put thee in possession without expense.* 16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, *in great pomp,* 2 Kings ix. 25., to take possession of it.

17 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which [is] in Samaria, *whose throne and common residence is there,* behold, [he is] in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. 19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where, (*or, as it should be rendered, in the manner that,*) dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. *Elijah went boldly to deliver the message; and as soon as Ahab saw him, his conscience was awakened and told him that he had made God, and consequently his prophet, his enemy; and therefore he begins before Elijah said any thing.* 20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? *wilt thou never suffer me to be quiet? He supposed it was not so much God's message as Elijah's hatred to him.* And he answered, I have found [thee:] because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD; *thou art a slave to thy lusts and passions, which hurry thee on to all manner of wickedness. And for this,* 21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, 22 And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked [me] to anger, and made Israel to sin; *thy whole family shall be destroyed, and not one of them be buried;* 23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the

dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. 25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. 26 And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all [things] as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel*.

27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly; *or barefoot, as mourners used to do*†. 28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: [but] in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house; *and so he did; Ahab's blood was licked up by the dogs, and his son Joram slain, and their carcases thrown into this vineyard; and Ahab's family were destroyed, as we shall find in the course of the story.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how mercy is thrown away upon the wicked. Ahab was never the better for all the appearances of God for him recorded in the former chapters. He forgets all the favours he had received, all the obligations he was under, and grows worse and worse.

2. What a fatal thing is a discontented spirit! How vain is regal dignity and power to the man, whose mind is not regulated by the rules of wisdom, goodness, and religion. Ahab had almost every thing; had gained two victories, and humbled his proud enemy; yet he was a slave to his passions, and because he could not have Naboth's vineyard, he was sick of the spleen, fretted, and enjoyed nothing. A discontented and fretful temper is a wretched disposition. *Envy is rottenness to the bones.* It does not arise so much from our condition, as from the state of the mind.

* It is uncertain whether this is an addition of the prophet's addressing himself to the courtiers and spectators, or the historian's remark. It shows us that he was infamously wicked, and that at the instigation of his wife; but this would not excuse him; and therefore God cast out Ahab and his family.

† There was no sincere repentance, or else he would have put away his idols, and restored the vineyard. He had perhaps some purposes of amendment; but they were soon forgotten. Nevertheless God showed such regard to this appearance of humility, that he probably sent Elijah to him again to comfort him. He humbled himself so as neither Jeroboam nor Baasha had done.

Fretful persons will always have something to fret at. God consults our present ease and comfort, as well as our future happiness, when he commands us to be *content with such things as we have*, and says, *Thou shalt not covet.*

3. How odious is it to see forms of religion and civil justice abused by men of injustice and cruelty. What a solemn farce, to condemn an innocent man, and murder him under the colour of justice and the name of order! and what a terrible, shocking thing, that all the nobles and elders and people should join in it! Let us not think the worse of fasting and prayer because they have been thus abused; but lament the degeneracy into which men may sink, and have their conscience seared. Let us guard against covetousness and hatred of others, lest we be led to commit the vilest enormities.

4. Let us adore the providence of God and wait for his judgment, when reading of such scenes as these. Adore his providence in restraining the malice of men, and in preserving our lives from fraud and artifice. Innocence is no security from perjury and oppression. We should rejoice that a day is coming when these false judgments shall be called over, and then shall be made manifest *the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* Concerning such as Ahab we may say, as in Hab. i. 12, 13., *O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?*

5. How sad is their case who charge God's faithful prophets as their enemies, when they declare nothing but the messages of Jehovah! who think ministers forbid them the pleasures they like, and threaten them with the displeasure of God, only to gratify spleen and ill-nature. When the word comes home to their consciences, instead of being humbled, their language is, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? They become enemies for telling the truth.* The case of such is very bad, and there is little hope of their reformation.

6. How easily can God imbitter those advantages which men gain by their sins, with only the intimations of his wrath. Ahab was mightily pleased with his vineyard; was perhaps contriving how to lay it out, and what to plant; but Elijah came, and spoiled all. So men get estates and money by violence and fraud, by oppression and cheating; but it is turned to the gall of asps

within them, and is no profit to them. Ill-gotten goods never prosper. The consciences of such torment them; and this is but the beginning of sorrow.

7. We may infer, how graciously God will accept sincere penitents, when he paid such a regard to a mere external and servile profession. This story teaches us, that there may be an outward show of repentance when the heart is not humbled. There may be, as in *v.* 27, *a rending of the clothes, and putting sackcloth upon the flesh, and fasting*, without sincerity. God is pleased with marks of repentance; even for the sake of partial repentance, he often averts temporal judgments. But the sincere penitent shall have *his favour, which is life, and his loving-kindness, which is better than life. The sacrifice of God is a broken heart; a broken and a contrite spirit he will not despise.*

CHAPTER XXII.

Ahab, persuading Jehoshaphat to go with him against Ramoth-gilead, is slain there, and the dogs, according to Elijah's prophecy, lick up his blood; he is succeeded by Ahaziah; Jehoshaphat's good reign and death.

1 AND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. 2 And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel*. 3 And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead [is] ours, and we [be] still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? *Ben-hadad ought to have resigned it; and Ahab was the more solicitous about it, as it was an outline city, and a city of refuge.* 4 And *Ahab made a great feast, and artfully drew Jehoshaphat into alliance with him; and* he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I [am] as thou [art,] my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses; *all the forces of Judah were at Ahab's service.*

5 And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to-day. *Ahab never thought*

* In 2 Kings viii. 18., it is said that Jehoshaphat's son had married Ahab's daughter.

of this, but good king Jehoshaphat proposed it, as what was usual for all pious persons to do in warlike enterprises. 6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets *of the groves** together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the LORD shall deliver [it] into the hand of the king; *they all agreed that he should go and be successful.*

7 And Jehoshaphat said, [Is there] not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him? *Perhaps he began to suspect some fraud when he saw their numbers, and their earnest desires for him to go up, and considering the idolatrous character of the court.* 8 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, [There is] yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah†, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil; *this was no reason why he should not consult him; he ought to have loved him the better for his fidelity.* And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so; *do not presage evil to our enterprise, but let us hear what he saith, and then do as we see cause.* 9 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten [hither] Micaiah the son of Imlah. 10 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria, *where the courts of justice were kept;* and all the prophets prophesied before them. 11 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them. *This was a symbolical action in imitation of the true prophets.* 12 And all the prophets prophesied so, *All agreed in the same sentiment,* saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver [it] into the king's hand. 13 And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah, spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets [declare] good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak [that which is] good, *do not be singular in denouncing evil.* 14 And Micaiah said, [As] the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak, *without fear or partiality. A noble resolution! and he showed*

* These are called Ahab's prophets in r. 23; perhaps, to intimate that they were directed by him to prophesy in the name of the Lord, in order to deceive Jehoshaphat.

† He was probably now in prison, as a degraded prophet; compare r. 26.

great courage and honesty to say what follows before these two great kings. 15 So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver [it] into the hand of the king. *This was spoken ironically, as Ahab plainly perceived; as if he had said, Yes, go by all means, as these prophets advise thee.* 16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but [that which is] true in the name of the LORD? 17 And he said, I saw *in vision* all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd; *in a desolate condition, routed and flying, having no head or ruler:* and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace; *let them think of war no more, but return home.* 18 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? *this has always been his way; and therefore there is no heed to be given to what he saith.* 19 And he, *Micaiah, confirmed his message, and* said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left*. 20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? *Having resolved that he should perish by the Syrians, he purposes various methods of bringing it about.* And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. 22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets, *I will suggest to his prophets what shall deceive and ruin him.* And he said, Thou shalt persuade [him,] and prevail also: go forth, and do so. 23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, *hath permitted a lying spirit to possess these prophets,* and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee, *hath determined thou shalt perish.*

24 But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, *the chief of the college of the false prophets,* went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, *with intolerable insolence in the presence of*

* This is not a real representation of any thing done in the heavenly world, as if God was at a loss for expedients, or had any hand in the sins of his creatures; but it is a parabolical or visionary representation, to let them know there was a higher king, that his providence was concerned about the affairs of this world, and that he has various ways of bringing about his purposes.

the king, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? *How came the spirit so suddenly to pass to thee and inspire thee with such contrary answers?* 25 And Micaiah *did not return blow for blow, but calmly* said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself *through fear, lest thou shouldst be seized and punished as a false prophet.* 26 And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; 27 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this [fellow] in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I come in peace; *keep him a close prisoner and on hard fare, till I return in peace and prove him to be a liar; then he shall be put to death. Alas, he had forgotten his own wise speech to Ben-hadad, 'Let not him that girdeth on the armour boast as he that putteth it off.'* 28 And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me; *I am willing to put the proof of my mission on this footing; let me die as a false prophet, if he returns in peace.* And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you, *mark whether I am a true prophet or no.*

29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. 30 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes; *he thought they would make an attempt upon him if they perceived him, and therefore gave the honour of the command to Jehoshaphat.* And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. 31 But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel; *he had a particular spite against him, and above all things wished to take him prisoner.* 32 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it [is] the king of Israel; *they thought by his robes and attendants that he was so.* And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out; *cried to the Lord for help, as we read* 2 Chron. viii. 31.; *and he moved them to depart from him. God suffered this, to show him his folly and guilt in forming such an alliance.* 33 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it [was] not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

34 And a [certain] man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness; *he drew it*

at a venture, but it hit the right man, and in the right place, it entered his breast: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded, *that the wound may be dressed.* 35 And the battle increased that day: and the king was *willing to stay to give orders and animate his soldiers, but he was obliged to be* stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. 36 And there went a proclamation throughout the host, about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country; *the king of Syria, hearing of Ahab's death, was willing to draw off**.

37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. 38 And [one] washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD, which he spake, chap. xxi. 19. 39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 40 So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

41 And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. 42 Jehoshaphat [was] thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 43 And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing [that which was] right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; [for] the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places. 44 And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. 45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he warred, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 46 And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land. 47 [There was] then no king in Edom: a deputy [was] king. 48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber. 49 Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let

* The vision, in ver. 17, was now fulfilled. Ahab had time enough to think of Baal's altars, of Ben-hadad's escape, of Naboth's vineyard, and Micaiah's imprisonment; and to be filled with terrible agonies of conscience.

my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not. 50 And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead*.

51 Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. 52 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: 53 For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM Ahab's sparing Ben-hadad, and the consequence of it, we are taught, that sparing our corruptions will only deceive our expectations, and prove our ruin. So Ben-hadad did to Ahab. We are required to subdue our iniquities; if we spare them, we shall repent of our folly. They promise us ease and pleasure, but we shall be disappointed, and they will end in our destruction.

2. We should be solicitous to take divine direction in all our actions. Ahab did not think of this, but pious Jehoshaphat did. *In all our ways we should acknowledge God*, with a determination to follow the leadings of his providence, and the rules of his word; then will he *direct* and prosper *our paths*.

3. Let us be willing that friends and ministers should deal plainly with us when the soul is concerned. Those prophets who deal in generals, and prophesy smooth things, are our greatest enemies; yet men love to have it so. Those that will not have their mistakes rectified by the word, will soon be undeceived by the judgments of God, and wish they had taken warning.

4. There is no judging of truth or error by numbers. Unity is not always the mark of a true church, or true ministers. The whole assembly of prophets, four hundred, were all wrong. One despised, persecuted prophet, who differed from the rest, had truth on his side. Unanimity in opinion in the greatest ecclesiastical councils is not an argument for truth. One man may possibly know more of the divine will, and understand his bible

* A more particular account of Jehoshaphat's reign will be found in 2 Chron. xvii, xviii, xix, and xx. chapters, which may be read after this chapter.

better, than a whole assembly of divines. Let us therefore bring every thing to the test of scripture, and not be the servants of men.

5. Ministers should learn impartiality and courage in pronouncing the messages of God, and a purpose thoroughly to follow the intimations of the divine will, wherever it may lead. Micaiah, with a resolution as high as heaven, and a pang of seraphic zeal, determined, *v.* 14., *As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.* A good pattern for all ministers. They must declare the whole counsel of God, whether agreeable or disagreeable to their hearers.

6. Let us establish in our thoughts and our faith the universal providence of God. Micaiah declared this before two kings, with prophets and guards surrounding them, consulting about war. He declared God to be the great and universal King on his throne, while his heavenly hosts surround him, all executing his orders, and that all the affairs of this lower world are under his direction. He determines what it will be, while men are consulting how it may be or should be. Ever remember this truth, *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

7. From the whole we learn, how dangerous it is for good men to get into bad company. Jehoshaphat, by contracting an alliance with Ahab, brought evil upon himself and his house. He saw the prophet despised, abused and imprisoned, without interposing; and was in danger of losing his own life. The wisest and best of men are not secure in bad company; and though they may not be infected, yet they are often guilty of sins of omission in not reproving others, and are in danger of learning their ways and being like them, or at least being partakers of their sin. Our rule is, to *come out from among them and be separate*; *and have no friendship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, but to resist and reprove them.

THE

SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS,

CALLED BY THE SEVENTY

THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE KINGS.

INTRODUCTION.

This Book contains an account of the decline of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and the destruction of both. In the last chapter of 1 Kings, ver. 51 to the end, we find that Ahaziah walked in the way of his father Ahab, in worshipping the calves, and of his mother Jezebel; he did not take warning by the death of his father, nor was moved by the threatenings of Elijah against his mother and family.

CHAPTER I.

In which is an account of Moab's rebellion; of Ahaziah's fall; Elijah's prophecy of his death; and of his bringing down fire from heaven to destroy Ahaziah's messengers.

1 THEN Moab rebelled against Israel, after the death of Ahab. *Moab and Edom were subdued by David, but when the kingdom came to be divided, Moab fell to the ten tribes, and Edom to Judah. Both revolted much about the same time. In the third chapter we have a farther account of this rebellion.*

2 And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that [was] in Samaria, and was sick, *was dangerously hurt:* and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease*. 3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up

* Ekron was a considerable city among the Philistines. Baal-zebub signifies, *the lord of flies.* He was looked upon as the tutelar deity of their country, who defended it from swarms of flies, which were frequent and pernicious; or delivered them from some pestilence that was attended with great swarms of flies. Probably Ahaziah sent here, because his own Baal had deceived his father. This was so famous an idol, that the prince of the devils was called by the Jews Baal-zebub.

to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, [Is it] not because [there is] not a God in Israel, [that] ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? 4 Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die *for this affront to the God of Israel.* And Elijah departed *to mount Carmel.* 5 And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back *without executing my orders?* 6 And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, [Is it] not because [there is] not a God in Israel, [that] thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. *His discovering the errand on which they were going, affected them so, that they could not but regard what he said.* 7 And he said unto them, What manner of man [was he] which came up to meet you, and told you these words? *No wonder he was curious to know who it was.* 8 And they answered him, [He was] an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It [is] Elijah the Tishbite.

9 Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. *He sent the captain with authority to apprehend him and put him to death, or why did he send so many? And if this was his design, it was ridiculous. For if he was a common man, there did not need so many; if he was a prophet, these and a thousand more would not do the business.* And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him *in a very haughty and scornful manner,* Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. 10 And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I [be] a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. 11 Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. 12 And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I [be] a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty *.

* Tindal inquires, Where was the justice in killing these men for delivering a blunt message? We answer, that the temper and conduct of Elijah is not to be arraigned, because it was evidently approved of God; and the circumstances of the case, and the temper of the king and the people, were sufficient to vindicate

13 And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty: and the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. 14 Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight*. 15 And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king†. 16 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, [is it] not because [there is] no God in Israel to inquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram *his brother* reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah‡; because he had no son. 18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah, which he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE on what a precarious tenure princes as well as others hold their lives. Ahaziah thought himself safe in his house; but he fell, and languished, and died. This is a warning to us all to *be always ready*, as we are all liable to accidents where we least expect them; *we stand in jeopardy every hour.* It teaches us not

the action. It was designed to convince the king of his folly, and to recover a regard and esteem for the Lord's prophets, when they saw them so immediately under the divine care. How many millions have been sacrificed to the pride and obstinacy of princes! yet our tender-hearted deists are grieved for these poor men, more than for all of them.

* This third captain was sensible of the hand of God in this thing, and acknowledges that he was indeed a prophet; he believed his interest in him, and did not come willingly, but to obey the king's orders.

† This was a great instance of faith and courage, considering how obnoxious he was to the king and Jezebel, especially after destroying the captains, and threatening the king's death. It shows that though he did not come before, it was not for fear of the king or the captains, but because he would magnify his office.

‡ The second year in which Jehoram's son reigned with him; he was viceroy while the king went to Ramoth-gilead, that if he should be slain there might be no debate about the successor. This occasions some confusion in the dates of the reigns, but it is a very common thing in all histories.

to put our trust in princes. *Man at his best state is altogether vanity.*

2. Practical atheism is at the bottom of our forgetfulness of God and departure from him. *Is it not because there is no God in Israel?* an expostulation proper to be put to many professing christians, who believe in God, and profess to know him, but *in works deny him.* If there is a God in Israel, an eternal, unchangeable, all-sufficient God, why do they make a god of their bellies and of their money, and seek possessions in this world, and put any creature in God's place? Alas! atheism is at the bottom of all this. Is it not because they think there is no God in Israel?

3. Observe the folly and obstinacy of men, and to what a degree of hardness the human heart is capable of arriving. See it in the folly of Ahaziah sending to Ekron, to inquire whether he should recover. He was not solicitous how to behave in his sickness, or what should become of him after death; but only to know whether he should recover. And this folly is acted over in every age. See his obstinacy in sending one detachment after another, when he knew they were slain by a miracle. We see it also in the captains, in going when they saw the carcases of their companions perhaps smoking before their eyes. To what a lamentable degree of hardness of heart, and to what a pitch of wickedness, may men arrive, when they forsake God, and he forsakes them!

4. We are here taught the different spirit of the law and the gospel. Elijah acted by divine impulse, and worthy ends were to be answered by it. We read, in Luke ix. 54., that the disciples James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, even as Elias did. But Christ rebuked his disciples for it. The gospel inflicts no such severities on offenders. *Ye know not,* says Christ, *what spirit ye are of.* Elijah was all zeal for God; you are in a passion. He did it for God's glory; you for your own honour and reputation. *The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

5. We see the folly of contending with God, and the wisdom of submitting to him. The third captain was wise, otherwise he had been destroyed with the rest. The only way to avoid the wrath of God, is to bow down before him, and beg our lives and the life of our souls from him. The fear of his terrible majesty and wrath, and the recollection of the fatal consequences of the

presumption and obstinacy of others, should promote in us an humble and penitent submission. Let us bow our necks to the sceptre of his grace, lest he dash us to pieces, or consume us, in his hot displeasure.

6. See how safe good men are in following where God leads. An angel bids Elijah go, and he goes, *not fearing the wrath of the king.* It was strange, that he who sent for him again and again in such a mad rage, should let him go. But even king's hearts are in the hand of the Lord. Learn hence to follow the leadings of Providence, to trust God in the way of duty, and to say, *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.* Heb. xiii. 6.

CHAP. II. 1—12.

Elijah, after taking leave of his friends, and dividing the waters of Jordan, is translated; Elisha's sorrow on that account.

1 AND it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal*. 2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el: *Elijah might say this, to express his own unwillingness to have it seen, and to try Elisha's fidelity and zeal. Beth-el was a noted place in the patriarchal ages, but now was the seat of idolatry; yet there was a school of the prophets there.* And Elisha said [unto him, As] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. 3 And the sons of the prophets that [were] at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? *from being thy teacher and governor?* And he said, Yea, I know [it;] hold ye your peace†. 4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me

* Elijah, having intimation of his intended removal, takes a circuit to settle the colleges, and to counsel and pray with them. He and Elisha set out from Gilgal, a remarkable place, where the Israelites had their first encampment, where the covenant was renewed, and the twelve stones set up.

† This great event was revealed to some of them, and published to the rest; Elisha, full of thought and big with the expectation of it, only desires them to be calm and sedate, to wait the event, and mark every action.

to Jericho; *where was another college of the prophets. All these societies Elijah visited before his translation.* And he said, [As] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. 5 And the sons of the prophets that [were] at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know [it;] hold ye your peace. *They bear the same testimony, and Elisha returns the same answer.* 6 And Elijah, *to try him once more,* said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, [As] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee; *he was determined not to part from him as he knew his ascension was very near.* And they two went on. *Elijah would permit none but Elisha to attend him.* 7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off; *to observe this great event, and to be witnesses of it to others:* and they two stood by Jordan. 8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped [it] together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. *God permitted this extraordinary miracle to grace the last day of his abode on earth.*

9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, *no doubt by divine warrant,* Ask what I shall do for thee, *what favour I shall request for thee,* before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me; *not that he might have twice as much as Elijah, but, as the eldest child had a double portion, he desires to have a portion more than his brethren, as his successor in the important and difficult work of opposing the prevailing corruptions and idolatry of the times.* 10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing, *a rare and singular blessing, which God does not usually bestow:* [nevertheless,] if thou see me [when I am] taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be [so*.] 11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, *perhaps of the state to which Elijah was going, or the duty of his successor,* that, behold [there appeared] a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah

* His seeing him could have no material influence to bestow the blessing; but he had a secret impression on his mind that there would be a correspondence between his seeing him taken away and God's granting the petition. By this means he would be led to keep his mind more attentive to the wonderful scene, and more fit to bear witness of it.

went up by a whirlwind into heaven; *an host of angels appearing like a chariot and horses, immediately took him up, and carried him off.*

12 And Elisha saw [it,] and he cried, *in a mixture of astonishment and sorrow,* My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof; *a brighter and surer defence of thy country than chariots and horsemen; speaking in allusion to the forms in which the angels appeared.* And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. *This showed that he saw him ascend, and he expressed his sorrow by rending his garments, grieving for his own great loss and the loss of the public.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We infer, that those who are old and going to heaven, should be concerned for the happiness of the rising generation; should instruct them and counsel them. Thus Elijah did in his circular visits. He did not close his day with meditation and devotion entirely, but was active to the last, holding religious discourse with Elisha, till he was taken to heaven. Thus aged and dying saints should talk of God's wondrous works, recommend his ways, and speak on his behalf. This is a good frame to die in; and *blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

2. We should earnestly desire and labour to obtain the spirit of our predecessors; to equal, yea and exceed, our brethren and fellow-labourers, not only in their state and learning, but in piety and zeal. Elisha did not desire the great things of this world for himself, but his father's spirit. This should be the object of our desire, to serve God as faithfully as our fathers, and have the same grace to carry us honourably and usefully through life, and to enable us to finish it well.

3. Let us thankfully meditate on this illustrious instance of divine wisdom and goodness in the translation of Elijah. It was a reward for his distinguished piety, zeal, courage, and patience, a proof of a future state, and an encouragement to be faithful amidst idolatry and opposition, especially to young prophets. *God makes his angels spirits,* or winds; *and his ministers a flame of fire,* which implies splendour and not terror. They are as a whirlwind for speed, but not for violence. Thus angels now conduct good men to heaven; and thus at the last-day *the elements shall*

melt with fervent heat, and the heavens shall be on fire, and the saints shall be caught up in the clouds, shall mount up like Elijah, to heaven. Many curious questions about him are in vain. If we would find him, let us imitate his faith and patience, his courage and zeal. Then will God send his chariot to fetch us home. Let us long for this, and say, *Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?*

4. The removal of useful men, especially of prophets, deserves to be lamented, how honourable and comfortable soever the circumstances of that removal may have been. It is a loss to us; they were our fathers and guides; it is a loss to the public. It is better to lose many men of war. To muster soldiers, and lose saints, is a dreadful exchange; therefore, *when the righteous perish, let us lay it to heart.*

CHAP. II. 13, to the end.

Elisha succeeds Elijah as a prophet; he enters on his office, and works several miracles.

13 HE took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, *as a pledge of his succeeding him in the office,* and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; 14 And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where [is] the LORD God of Elijah*? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

15 And when the sons of the prophets which [were] to view at Jericho saw him, *either when they saw this miracle, or, as Bishop Clayton supposes, when they saw his face shine like Moses',* they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him, *in token of reverence and subjection to him as the father of the prophets. This was amiable humility, considering that he was only a common farmer, and they were all trained up in the schools of the prophets.* 16 And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with

* This was not an expression of distrust, but of his humble dependance on God, and cheerful expectation that he would be with him, and appear on his behalf.—There is a word omitted by the translators after Elijah, *he also;* is he also gone? as if he had said, He is in being, is still the same; though my father is gone, God is not.

thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley*. And he said, Ye shall not send, *it will be to no purpose.* 17 And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not. 18 And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not? *This would make them ashamed of their own mistake, and promote a greater regard to Elisha.*

19 And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city [is] pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water [is] naught, and the ground barren†. 20 And, *to prevent any suspicion of fraud, and to show there was no merit in vessels,* he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein‡. And they brought [it] to him. 21 And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren [land.] 22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake; *hereby Elisha's character and authority were confirmed. This was a miracle of mercy, the next, of judgment.*

23 And he went up from thence unto Beth-el, *to comfort them under the loss of Elijah, and to show that he was his successor:* and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, *young men capable of knowing good and evil,* and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead§. 24 And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD, *by an immediate impulse from him.* And there came forth two she bears out of the

* The prophets were sometimes transported from place to place, as Philip, Acts viii. 39.; or they might suppose that if his spirit was removed, his body might be left, and they were desirous of giving it an honourable burial.

† Perhaps there was some unwholesome spring near the college.

‡ This was a very unlikely means, (as when Christ anointed a man's eyes with clay), to show that it was wrought only by God's power.

§ Beth-el was the seat of Ahab's idolatry; and the people were so degenerate as to have a particular contempt for the Lord's prophets. It is probable that they sent out these children to insult Elisha and make a jest of his natural infirmity; accordingly they called him an old baldpated fool, and bid him get up to heaven after his master, for they did not want his company there. They were vexed to have a college or divinity school among them, and were used to revile the prophets and students. This discovered rooted impiety, and a settled aversion to God's prophets.

wood, and tare forty and two children of them*. 25 And he went from thence to mount Carmel, *to spend some time in meditation and prayer;* and from thence he returned to Samaria, *to more active scenes of business and duty.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. When saints and faithful prophets die, it is an unspeakable comfort for us to think that God lives. Elijah is gone, but Elijah's God still lives, and we know where to find him. Let us seek him, and live near to him. In vain do we put on the prophet's mantle, without the prophet's God. The garments, estates, and books of predecessors avail nothing, if we have not their God. *If we are followers of them, who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises, their God will be our guide even unto death, and our God for ever and ever.*

2. Let this awful story be a warning to children and young people. It can hardly be doubted but that this is one end God intended should be answered by it. Take care of your words; do not mock people for their infirmities; especially the aged and infirm. If you scoff at his people and ministers, God hears, and will punish those who do so. Parents should often warn their children of this danger, lest they suffer in their children's sufferings, as these idolaters did. We can never expect good from those children whose education is neglected. It is in vain to grieve for miscarriages which their care might have prevented. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

* The bears destroying so many proves, they were executioners of the divine vengeance; or else two or three children would have satisfied their hunger, and the rest would have escaped. An awful providence, designed to awaken a sense of religion in the minds of those idolaters; to promote their veneration for the prophet; to impress the rising generation with religious fear, as the death of these children was so terrible; and to lead them all to argue, that if the children were slain only for mocking God's prophet, how much more shall grown-up persons be punished for continually persecuting and killing them.

CHAPTER III.

A war between Jehoram and his allies and Moab; the straits to which they were reduced, and their deliverance; with their complete victory over the Moabites.

1 NOW Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. 2 And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made; *alarmed by what had befallen his father and brother, and by war breaking out, he removed the image of Baal; and Jezebel his mother submitted to this, being struck with the calamities that were coming upon the family.* 3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom; *he left the calves standing, because that was the support of the devotion.*

4 And Mesha king of Moab was a sheep master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool*. 5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel†.

6 And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel, *with a design to subdue the Moabites.* 7 And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I [am] as thou [art,] my people as thy people, [and] my horses as thy horses, (1 Kings xxii. 4.). *Jehoshaphat was induced to this, partly by Jehoram's reformation, and because the Moabites had lately invaded him,* 2 Chron. xxi. 8 And he said, *he called a council and consulted them,* Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom; *because the Moabites were weakest there, and they should have the assistance of*

* This was his tribute, and was paid in kind; this it was that enabled Solomon to offer up such numerous sacrifices.

† The rebellion began in the time of Ahaziah, chap. i. 1., but he reigned only a short time; and being sick did not attempt to reduce them.

the Edomites, who were tributary to Judah. (See ch. i. 1.). 9 So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey, *round the dead sea, that they might attack them where they were least expected and not prepared to receive them; and they came into that part of the wilderness where their fathers wanted water,* Exodus xi. 8., and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. 10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab! *This was a passionate and insolent complaint, for he had not consulted God, nor prayed for help.* 11 But Jehoshaphat, *the pious king of Judah,* said, [Is there] not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here [is] Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah, *that is, waited upon him as a menial servant. None knew what a treasure and friend they had in the camp; perhaps he came by the special directions of Providence.* 12 And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him; *hearing he was Elijah's successor, and of the extraordinary miracle he had done, they all went down to him to show him the greater respect.* 13 And Elisha said unto *Jehoram* the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother, *prophets whom he still openly avowed, and perhaps had some of them with him.* And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay, *it is vain to apply to them:* for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab; *he intimates that none but God could help them; and hopes, if he had no regard to him, he would to the other two kings, and not suffer them to perish.* 14 And Elisha said, [As] the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee; *a regard to Jehoshaphat's piety alone disposed him to use his interest with heaven for them.* 15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him*. 16 And he said, Thus saith the

* Elisha was probably ruffled and discomposed at the presence of this idolatrous king; the spirit of prophecy was not at his command; it was necessary to be composed and calm to receive the divine oracles; and when the music had composed his mind, God was pleased to reveal himself to him.

LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. 17 For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. 18 And this is [but] a light thing in the sight of the LORD, *the promise goes further;* he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. 19 And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones *.

20 And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered *at the temple in Jerusalem, and when he and the pious Israelites joined their prayers,* that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water, *which probably came from the rocks.* 21 And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border *of their country, to defend themselves.* 22 And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side [as] red as blood: 23 And they said, This [is] blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil †. 24 And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in [their] country. 25 And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees, *intending to depopulate the country that they might have no more disturbance from such neighbours:* only in Kir-haraseth *the capital city,* Isa. xvi. 11., left they the stones thereof, howbeit the slingers went about [it,] and smote it; *they besieged it in form, and made breaches in it.*

26 And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through [even] unto the king of Edom, *think-*

* This was contrary to the positive precept in the law, but was dispensed with by the command of the prophet, and in other extraordinary cases.

† The Moabites knowing there was no water there, and that no rain had fallen, concluded that they had quarrelled through rage for want of water, or some other cause, and destroyed one another. Remembering what a quarrel there was between them and their allies, when Jehoshaphat opposed them, 2 Chron. xx., and so confident were they of this matter, that without sending any scouts, they marched in disorder to seize the spoils.

*ing to attack him, the army being weakest there**: but they could not, *and were repulsed.* 27 Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him [for] a burnt offering upon the wall *to his god Chemosh, to secure his favour.* And there was great indignation against Israel, *or rather, great indignation and remorse in Israel; they were so affected and grieved at this barbarous action, that they raised the siege and returned home:* and they departed from him, and returned to [their own] land.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How miserably do those who put up with a partial regard to God's law deceive themselves! Jehoram put away the images, but not the calves. Thus do sinners put away some sins, but keep others; and think to please God by such partial obedience: but they affront him and deceive themselves. *He that keepeth the whole law, and offends only in one point, is guilty of all.*

2. See how prone good men are to fall into the same fault for which they have smarted. Jehoshaphat had suffered by his alliance with Ahab, 2 Chron. xviii., and had once bravely resolved against such connexions; but here he falls into the same sin again. This was written for our warning. Good men often think, that whatever other errors they may fall into, they shall never fall into those for which they have suffered and been penitent. But there is danger even of this. *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

3. Learn how vain the confidence of sinners is in the day of distress. What confusion will they be in when sent to their idols, as Jehoram was; *get thee to the prophets of thy father and thy mother.* So when conscience is alarmed, or sickness or death approaches, what will ye do when sent to your money, to your pleasures, to your gay company? can they save you? Think of such seasons. They will come; and *what fruit will ye then have in those things of which you will be ashamed?*

4. We have here an instance of the usefulness of music in moderating the passions and composing the mind. Elisha played on a minstrel for this purpose; and therefore it was studied in the schools of the prophets. Among the heathens it was always recommended; and many instances of its remarkable effects are

* Perhaps he had personal resentment against him, Edom having been formerly allied to Moab; or, he thought that being mercenaries, they would soon fly.

recorded. It is an agreeable entertainment for young people, if they do not spend too much time about it. The love of it is generally reckoned a sign of a good temper; and the moderate use of it may help to mend a bad one.

5. It is necessary to govern our passions if we desire the Spirit of God to rest upon us. Anger or fretfulness drives away the Spirit. The peaceful dove flies from railing, noise, and strife. Therefore let not anger, wrath and bitterness be once found among us, if we desire his influences to improve our virtues, and afford us strong consolation.

6. See the regard to be shown to good and bad men. The prophets indeed are not always models for us. It is not fit that we should say to a king, What have I to do with thee? though a prophet might. Elisha had great respect for Jehoshaphat, but he would not even look upon Jehoram. It is the character of a good man that *a vile person is contemned in his sight*, however great, *and he loves* and honours *all that fear the Lord.*

7. Observe the folly and misery of idolatry, in the inhuman rites with which they think to appease their deities. The king of Moab offered up his eldest son with this design. It was a common practice in the heathen world. There are accounts of many such sacrifices among the Indians of later years. Let us lament the degeneracy of human nature, that is capable of offering such unnatural and cruel sacrifices; and pray God to lead them to a better knowledge, and to send them the glorious light of the gospel. These instances should make us thankful that we enjoy it. *He hath not dealt so with many other nations; let us therefore praise the Lord.*

CHAPTER IV.

In which we have some more of Elisha's miracles, for the honour of true religion, and the encouragement of those who adhered to it.

1 NOW there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD; *he did not join in the idolatry of the place, and was perhaps impoverished by Jezebel's persecution:* and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. 2 And Elisha said unto

her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil; *as she had little or no money, he asked what was in the house which might be sold to pay the debt.* 3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, [even] empty vessels; borrow not a few. *The neighbours might wonder why she borrowed so many vessels, and might have curiosity to inquire into the cause;* 4 And *therefore he adds,* when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, *to prevent their too great curiosity, to hinder the importunity of the creditors, and to avoid any ostentation of the miracle, and that thou mayest have liberty to use proper devotional expressions on the occasion,* and *thou* shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought [the vessels] to her; and she poured out. 6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, [There is] not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt*, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

8 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, *which lay between Carmel and Samaria, a way which the prophet often went,* where [was] a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread; *a rich woman, who often asked him to eat bread on his journey, which he at first modestly refused, but at length accepted.* And [so] it was, [that] as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread; *she made him so welcome, that afterwards he always called on her.* 9 And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this [is] an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually; *not only a prophet, but a man of great sanctity.* 10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall, *remote from the house, suited to that love of meditation and retirement which she saw he affected;* and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick, *all accommodations necessary for a single person:* and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. 11 And it fell on a day, that he came

* He does not order her to blaze about the miracle among her neighbours, but to sell the oil; and by degrees discharge the debt. Undoubtedly the oil was of the best kind, and she would have a quick sale for it; but she was to keep the matter secret; to acknowledge the goodness of God; and seek direction from him what she was to do.

thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. 12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. 13 And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care*, what [is] to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host, *for any preferment for thy husband, or to redress any complaint?* And she answered, I dwell among mine own people, *am well beloved by them, and live upon good terms among them.* 14 And he said *to his servant,* What then [is] to be done for her? *He asked his servant, who was much in the family when Elisha was retired to his chamber, and was therefore likely to know, if he had observed any thing that she wanted or desired.* And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old *and will no doubt think a child an unspeakable favour.* 15 And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door, *with great modesty and respect.* 16 And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, [thou] man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid; *do not deceive me with false hopes.* 17 And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

18 And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers, *and was excessively heated, and seized with a fever;* 19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. 20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and [then] died. *All her tender care could not preserve his life.* 21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut [the door] upon him, and went out. *She uttered no peevish, indecent words, but showed an admirable temper, and a full persuasion of the extraordinary power of the prophet to raise him again, as Elijah had done in another instance; she did not so much as tell her husband that the child was dead.* 22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again. 23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? [it is] neither new moon,

* The original word signifies *an eager concern.* The prophet in a handsome manner intimates that she had not only done a generous action, but with a very obliging air of tenderness and friendship.

nor sabbath *. And she said, [It shall be] well. *She went for a good end, and did not doubt but she should succeed.* 24 Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward, slack not [thy] riding for me, except I bid thee. 25 So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that *he wondered she should come at so unusual a time, and* he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, [yonder is] that Shunammite: 26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, [Is it] well with thee? [Is it] well with thy husband? [is it] well with the child? And she answered, [It is] well †. 27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away, *thinking such a posture did not become a person of her rank, especially one who had been so kind a benefactor to his master.* And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul [is] vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid [it] from me, and hath not told me, *hath not revealed the cause of her grief to me:* 28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? *was not I easy without children? did I by any importunity extort this child?* did I not say, Do not deceive me? *was I not solicitous that no hope might be raised, lest my expectation should be disappointed? which is now peculiarly affecting. Thus plainly intimating that the child was dead.* 29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way, *make haste:* if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again, and lay my staff upon the face of the child; *thinking that his staff would work a miracle, like Moses' rod or Elijah's mantle.* 30 And the mother of the child said, [As] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee: *her faith was not strong enough to think that any thing could be done without Elisha's presence.* And he arose, and followed her. 31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but *it was all in vain,* [there was] neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. 32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, [and] laid upon his bed. 33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon

* In the tribes, those who could not go to the temple were used to attend at the college of the prophets, and join there in the exercise of devotion.

† Her answer was literally true. But when we consider the person from whom this came, it discovered that she had great piety and command of temper. While it put off farther inquiry, it showed her calm resignation to the will of God, and a full conviction of the wisdom and goodness of all his dealings.

them twain, and prayed *fervently* unto the LORD. 34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, *to express his earnest and importunate desires:* and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. 35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro, *full of anxious concern, and wholly intent on what he was about;* and *he* went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, *and so threw off the obstruction in his head, which was the cause of his illness and death,* and the child opened his eyes. 36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. 37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out. *Her heart was so affected, and her passions so strong, that she could not speak, but expressed her reverence and thankfulness by her actions.*

38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and [there was] a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets [were] sitting before him, *as his pupils:* and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seeth pottage for the sons of the prophets. 39 And *as they had none in the garden, because of the dearth,* one *who was better acquainted with his bible than his herbal,* went out into the field to gather herbs, and *he* found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds, *some noxious herbs,* his lapful, and came and shred [them] into the pot of pottage: for they knew [them] not. 40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O [thou] man of God, [there is] death in the pot. And they could not eat [thereof:] *they immediately felt themselves so ill that they concluded they were poisoned.* 41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast [it] into the pot*; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot; *every one might eat with safety.*

42 And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves, *or small cakes,* of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof†. And he

* Perhaps some meal had been put in before; but it was to no purpose till the prophet did it; hereby to show the divine power in removing the noxious quality of the broth, and preserving those that had taken of it.

† When the Israelites could not go to offer the first fruits at Jerusalem, the pious sort used to bring them to the college, and so the students and prophets were supported.

said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. 43 And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? *it will not be a morsel for each. But the prophet over-ruled the objection; and* he said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave [thereof.] 44 So he set [it] before them, and they did eat, and left [thereof,] according to the word of the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE observe that the families of the best of men may fall into difficult circumstances when they are removed; as the family of the prophet, mentioned ver. 1., did. Let us not think the case singular if this should be the lot of ourselves or our acquaintance, as instances of this kind are common.

2. The children of God's people, when thus reduced, may find support in the God of their fathers, as the prophet's widow and children here did. His blessing can increase and multiply our provisions as he pleases, and cause them to flow on as long as there is room to receive them. *Trust in the Lord, and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed; for the righteous are never forsaken, nor his seed, though begging bread.* Learn,

3. That we should be concerned to do strict justice, and to pay our debts, if we desire to live comfortably, and enjoy the blessing of God. The prophet directs her to sell and pay her debts first. None of the oil was hers, till her creditors were paid. This maxim is necessary to be observed in the present day; *owe no man any thing, render to all their due,* if we leave ever so little for ourselves. Widows, if able, should honestly pay their husbands' debts, and labour and save to do it. Better to beg or starve, than defraud others, or deal deceitfully, which will entail a lasting blemish on our families and our honesty.

4. Grateful hearts will devise grateful things. The holiest men of God will be grateful for favours conferred. It is mean and base to imagine every kindness is our due, and that we are to do nothing in return. If others are careful of us and kind to us, it becomes us to requite their kindness, and by every prudent method to show our gratitude. Call a man ungrateful, and you say every thing bad of him.

4. It should give great pleasure to those who are rich and

great to be generous and hospitable, especially towards the people of God. How friendly and generous was this Shunammite! Those who are rich in this world should be *ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

6. See how precarious our dearest comforts are. Parents must not depend upon the lives of their children. This widow's son was well in the morning, but dead at noon. What a melancholy alteration! Those who have relations and children, should be as those who have none. *Man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down. His days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth; the wind passeth over him and he is gone.*

7. We learn, from the example of this amiable woman, how to behave when our children or dearest friends are taken away. It is a satisfaction when they are lost, that we have not set our hearts upon them inordinately, ver. 28. She said, *It is well.* Well in general, *because God doth it;* all is well that he doth, however it may affect us; and it is well with them if they are gone to heaven.

8. While we wait on the Lord in the way of duty, we may hope for protection and provision. These miracles of mercy in multiplying food, and defending from poison, establish our confidence in God, who can perform the most illustrious things, and whose perfections are immutably the same. We are not to expect extraordinary and miraculous things now; but God still governs the world; and it is our duty, and will be our wisdom and happiness, *to cast all our care upon him who careth for us.*

CHAPTER V.

An account of Naaman's leprosy and cure*, and the sin and punishment of Gehazi.

1 NOW Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, *a favourite of the king's and of all the people,* because by him the LORD had given

* Bp. Wilson observes, that by this remarkable providence and history, the Syrians had an opportunity of coming to the knowledge of the true God.

deliverance unto Syria*: he was also a mighty man in valour, [but he was] a leper; *though this did not exclude him from society as among the Jews, yet it was a loathsome and dangerous disorder.* 2 And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3 And she said unto her mistress, *while she was bewailing her husband's misfortunes,* Would God my lord [were] with the prophet that [is] in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. *She no doubt had told her mistress of his other miracles, and thought it was in his power to do this.* 4 And [one] went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that [is] of the land of Israel. *This was related to Naaman, who begs leave of the king to go to him.* 5 And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel, *whom he supposed knew the prophet and had interest with him.* And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand [pieces] of gold, and ten changes of raiment. 6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have [therewith] sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy; *the substance of the letter was for him to take care to have Naaman cured.* 7 And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, [Am] I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy†? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me. *This behaviour of the king added great pomp to the miracle, and made it more observable at court, and throughout the kingdom.* 8 And it was [so,] when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel, *and a God, by whom that prophet is enabled to work miracles.* 9 So Naaman came with his horses, and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha, *expecting to be received with great external marks of respect.* 10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven

* The sacred historian here owns the hand of God in his goodness towards the enemies of Israel.

† The king of Israel, misunderstanding his letter, thinking he expected a cure from him, was much distressed, and rent his clothes; supposing he designed to pick a quarrel with him, by demanding what was impossible to be done.

times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean*. 11 But Naaman *thought the prophet did not treat him with sufficient respect, and he* was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper; *that he would have performed the cure with a more solemn air, and greater ease and speed.* 12 [Are] not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may not I wash in them, and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage. 13 And his servants came near, and *one who was a wise and prudent man* spake unto him, and said, My father, [if] the prophet had bid thee [do some] great thing, *if he had prescribed a long course of physic, or some painful operations,* wouldst thou not have done [it?] how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? *the trial can do no harm, and may do good, especially as it is commanded by the prophet.* 14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him *in his apartment,* and he, *that is, Naaman,* said, Behold, now I know that [there is] no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant, *take the present I have brought.* 16 But he said, [As] the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take [it;] but he refused†. 17 And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth *to build an altar with, as a pledge of his communion with that people and service?* for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD. 18 In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, [that] when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on

* Elisha sent a messenger to him, not for state, nor contempt, but because he loved retirement, and lest he should seem too fond of the honour done him. Washing in Jordan had no natural tendency to heal him; but this was to exercise his faith and humility, and put an honour on Jordan, where so many miracles had been done.

† Much might be said to excuse him if he had accepted it; it was a time of famine, and the sons of the prophets had need of it. But he thought the refusing it would give Naaman a better opinion of the Jewish religion, and show that their prophets were not mercenary, like idolaters; and that he in particular aimed not at his own wealth and reward, but to glorify God and do good to men.

my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing *. 19 And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

20 But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, *was vexed that his master had lost such an opportunity of enriching himself, and he* said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, [as] the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. 21 So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw [him] running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, [Is] all well? *It discovered remarkable gratitude and humility in him to show such regard on the prophet's account.* 22 And he said, All [is] well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments †. 23 And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents; *but Gehazi pretended to keep close to his master's order, and that one talent was sufficient; though he was soon prevailed upon to take two, in value more than six hundred pounds.* And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid [them] upon two of his servants; and they bare [them] before him. 24 And when he came to the tower, *or secret place, some out-house where he intended to conceal it,* he took [them] from their hand, and bestowed [them] in the house; and he let the men go, *lest Elisha should see them,* and they departed. 25 But he went in, and stood before his master, *and thought himself sure of the gain.* And Elisha said unto him, Whence [comest thou,] Gehazi, *where hast thou been?* And he said, Thy servant went no whither, *I was not out of doors.* 26 And he said unto him, Went not mine heart [with thee,] when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? *have I not as distinct a knowledge of what passed, as if I had been with thee?* [Is it] a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men servants,

* Naaman assures the prophet, that when he did this in future, it should not be an act of adoration, but only for the convenience of his master when he leaned upon him; and by sacrificing to the God of Israel, he made an open profession that he did not intend this as a religious action.

† This was a notorious lie in itself, and might lead Naaman to suspect, that though Elisha would not take gifts publicly, he was glad of them in private. Probably Elisha took care to undeceive Naaman, and return the money.

and maid servants? *As if he had said, I know thy scheme is to buy and plant and become a great man. But is this a time to do so, amidst public afflictions and great degeneracy? Above all, is this a time to bring a reflection upon the prophet and the God of Israel, especially from this new convert?* 27 The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever, *for a long time, as a monument of the knowledge, power, and justice of the God of Israel.* And he went out from his presence a leper [as white] as snow. *This was the worst kind of leprosy, and always reckoned incurable.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. We have in this chapter an instance of the good effects of instructing children in religious principles; this young captive carried the knowledge of God into Syria. The miracles of his prophet were a comfort to her mind in slavery, were useful to others, and led the way for Naaman's conversion. Parents should instruct their children in the great truths and principles of religion: as they will be of perpetual use to them, and make them useful to others. We know not where their lot may be cast; therefore we should be solicitous that they may carry their religion along with them.

2. See the difference between human and divine power. Naaman could not heal himself; the king of Syria could not; the king of Israel could not. *Am I a God?* says he. But the power of Jehovah could effect a cure at once. It is a pleasant reflection to every one who fears God, that *nothing is too hard for him.*

3. How common and how foolish is it for men to prefer their own fancy to God's directions. Naaman wanted a cure, but he would have it in his own way, and was angry at the prophet's plain prescription. A very common case. We may see instances of it every day. Is not the light of nature better than scripture? Are not the waters of Greece and Rome, the learning and eloquence of their philosophers, better than the plain preaching of the gospel? We ought, say they, to be sober and honest; but what doth such a plain and simple ordinance as the Lord's Supper signify? What can bread and wine do? So foolishly and absurdly do men argue. They are like Naaman, the worst enemies to themselves; and their leprosy of sin is never likely to be cured, till God's method is tried; that will be found easy and successful. *Wash and be clean.* May we learn then, with humility to comply

with all that God appoints; not *go about to establish our own righteousness*, but cheerfully submit to that method of justification and healing which God hath appointed and commanded.

4. Learn hence a holy tenderness of conscience. Naaman was afraid of displeasing the God of Israel, from whom he had received such favours. If the prophet had forbidden him to go into the house of Rimmon, he would not have gone. Let us be afraid of every sinful compliance, and not think to make reserves in our covenant with God, but guard against all appearance of evil.

5. Learn not to overburden young converts with excess of rigour. Carry the grand point, bring them to God, and have religious habits contracted; and by degrees they will leave off some lesser evils, when they have had larger experience of the reasonableness and advantage of religion.

6. We learn the evil of covetousness. *Having food and raiment let us therewith be content. They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* 1 Tim. vi. 8, 9, 10. All this was illustrated in Gehazi. We here see what mischiefs it breeds, and leads on from one lie to another.

7. What a melancholy thing was it for such a wicked servant as Gehazi to be in good Elisha's family. In Naaman's family were some wise and good servants, though they were strangers to the God of Israel; but in the prophet's this naughty, detestable servant. Though he had heard his master's prayers and instructions, and had seen his miracles, yet he acted in this base and scandalous manner. Let servants read over this story often; observe what a disgraceful figure Gehazi makes, and be upon their guard against a covetous spirit and a lying tongue. Though masters do not see them, though they have not the gift of prophecy to know when they have done wrong, yet God observes them. Let those especially who dwell in those families where God is worshipped, the sabbath sanctified, and religious instructions are given, be sensible of their privileges. If servants in religious families are wicked, they must be very wicked; great is their guilt now, and great will be their misery another day, if they go on in their evil ways. Let us all pray, that God would *remove from us the way of lying*, and *teach us the way of truth*.

CHAPTER VI.

Elisha causeth the iron to swim; discloseth the counsels of the Syrians; brings an host of them to Samaria, and saves them there; afterwards Samaria is besieged, and in great distress.

1 AND the sons of the prophets, *being increased in number,* said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee *at Gilgal* is too strait for us. 2 Let us go, we pray thee, unto *the wood near* Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell; *they were poor, and contented with a very plain habitation.* And he answered, Go ye. 3 And one said *to Elisha,* Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants *to assist us with thy advice.* And he answered, I will go. 4 So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. 5 But as one was felling a beam, the ax head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed, *and if it is lost I shall abuse the kindness of my friend who lent it me.* 6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast [it] in thither; and the iron did swim*. 7 Therefore said he, Take [it] up to thee. And he put out his hand and took it. *Every instance of this kind increased their reverence for the prophet and their regard to his instructions.*

8 Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and *the king* took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place [shall be] my camp; *the place where I will set some soldiers for an ambush to surprise the Israelites, and probably seize the king.* 9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place: for thither the Syrians are come down. 10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him, and warned him of, *to see if there was any reason for the caution,* and saved *both* himself *and his soldiers* there, not once nor twice, *but frequently.*

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us [is] for the king of Israel? *He*

* The Jews say that he cut a stick in the shape of an handle, and when he threw it into the water the head of an ax was miraculously joined to it.

thought there was some secret treachery, and that his counsels were betrayed. 12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that [is] in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. *Naaman had spread his fame, he had heard of his other miracles, and supposed nothing could exceed his power and knowledge.* 13 And he said, Go and spy where he [is,] that I may send and fetch him. *This was a foolish design, as if the prophet who knew all his schemes, should be ignorant of this.* And it was told him, saying, Behold, [he is] in Dothan, *a little city near Samaria.* 14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, *as all good servants should do,* and gone forth *to his work,* behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant, *terrified at the sight, ran to his master, and* said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? *This servant was but newly come to his master, and perhaps had seen but few of his miracles, and was therefore the more alarmed.* 16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that [be] with us, [are] more than they that [be] with them; *but the young man could not believe this, till he had clear information.* 17 And Elisha *therefore* prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain [was] full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, *of angels in that appearance, God's host, who then became visible, as they did at Christ's resurrection.*

18 And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness, *such a dazzling of their sight, as that they could not distinctly see the men they sought for,* according to the word of Elisha. *Then they inquired of Elisha where the prophet was;* 19 And Elisha said unto them, This [is] not the way *which you must go,* neither is this the city *where you shall meet with him:* follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. *This was literally true;* but *instead of this, by a stratagem which did them no harm, and might produce the greatest good,* he led them to Samaria. 20 And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these [men,] that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, [they were] in the midst of Samaria, *surrounded with the king and soldiers.* 21 And the king

of Israel said unto Elisha, *with great eagerness,* when he saw them, My father, shall I smite [them?] shall I smite [them?] 22 And he answered, Thou shalt not smite [them:] wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow *in cold blood?* set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master, *and tell him what kindness they have received**. 23 And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel *that year, as the Hebrew word may signify* †.

24 And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. 25 And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was [sold] for fourscore [pieces] of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five [pieces] of silver. *They were reduced to the last extremity, so that an ass's head, which was forbid to be eaten, was sold for near ten pounds; and less than a pint of vetches or tares, which was only fit for doves to eat, the worst of vegetables, was sold for about twelve shillings and sixpence.* 26 And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, *to examine the guards and view the works,* there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. 27 And he said, *probably in a violent passion,* If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn floor, or out of the wine press? *can I fill the barns and storehouses out of nothing?* 28 And the king said unto her, *when his passion began to cool a little,* What aileth thee? And she answered, *and tells him a sorrowful tale indeed,* This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. 29 So we boiled my son, and did eat him, and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son *to save his life, or to eat him alone; thus was that terrible threatening fulfilled,* Deut. xxviii. 53.

30 And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the

* The Syrians had thus a proof of the power of the God of Israel, in confounding their senses; of his mercy, in sparing their lives; and had such an opportunity of knowing him, and such obligations to serve him, as might have made it the happiest day in their lives.

† Either this band came no more out of gratitude; or, they came no more in this clandestine way, till they brought their whole army sometime after, perhaps upon some new provocation.

wall, and the people looked, and, behold, [he had] sackcloth within upon his flesh, *he appeared in public in deep mourning.* 31 Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day; *either because he did not let him destroy the Syrian bands, or he thought he had deceived him by assuring him of help, which did not come; or he thought he could have saved them, but would not.* 32 But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; *he was reading lectures to the students, or to some of the magistrates who came to him, exhorting them to courage and patience;* and [the king] sent a man from before him *to execute Elisha;* but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer, *that is, of wicked Ahab,* hath sent to take away mine head? *he knew his intention before he came;* look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door, *let him not enter;* [is] not the sound of his master's feet behind him? *he immediately follows to contradict the order.* 33 And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he, *that is, the king,* said, Behold, this evil [is] of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer? *Probably Elisha had promised him relief, but he thought he had deceived him, and that it was better to deliver it up to the Syrians than be starved and ruined; therefore in the beginning of the next chapter, Elisha fixes the time for their deliverance.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is a great comfort to good men, that the schools of the prophets increase. Let us pray that they may do so more and more. It is a good hearing that there is not room for them; it bodes well to the church. And therefore we should pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would incline them to prepare for the work, that the harvest may be furnished with numerous and suitable labourers.

2. Hence we are taught a useful lesson, to be careful of that which is borrowed. Many neglect this, and abuse the kindness of their friends, their horses, goods, or books. There are those who never return, or abuse, what they have borrowed; this is highly base and ungrateful, as well as dishonest, and is contrary to that golden rule of doing to others as we would be done by.

3. How desirable is it to have God on our side when engaged

in military affairs! He can discover all the secret stratagems of the enemy, and bring confusion upon their plots and designs.

4. How happy are the servants of God in having angels for their guard; and what a constant source of consolation is it in times of danger, that *greater is he that is with them, than all who are against them! If God be for us, who shall be against us?* When *without are fightings, and within are fears,* angels are their guard; he *gives them charge concerning us, to keep us in all our ways.* Happy those who can by the eye of faith see this.

5. See the dependance of the human mind upon God, and his power of infatuating it at pleasure. He can take away the senses and understanding in a moment. Have we not the greatest reason to bless God for the continuance of these, and to remember that it is *in him we live, and move, and have our being?*

6. See what a lovely virtue clemency is; and how well moderation and mercy become all, especially the Lord's prophets. It is prudent, even upon secular principles, to be gentle towards our enemies when we have them in our power, especially when resentment is sacrificed to religion; agreeably to such repeated advices as these; *if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* Rom. xii. 20.

7. How much are we indebted to God for plenty and security! We here see the terrible consequences of famine; they were glad to eat the vilest things, and were obliged, (lamentable necessity!) to boil even their own children for food. Humanity and natural affection were lost in the cravings of appetite. *Blessed be the Lord who maketh peace in our borders, and feedeth us with the finest of the wheat; that there is no breaking in of enemies, and no such complaining* as this *in our streets.*

8. The judgments of God often make the wicked worse, and lead them to the most absurd, instead of reasonable, conclusions. *v.* 31. *Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.* Had he reasoned thus, I will pull down the calves, and destroy the prophets of Baal; I will reform the idolatry and vices of the country; he had reasoned wisely. But nothing will serve him but Elisha's head, the best man in the kingdom; the greatest friend and benefactor to the whole country. All this proceeded from pride and passion. He says, *this evil is of the Lord.* This was a good remark, but he drew a most absurd consequence from it. Thus sinners often fret against God. May we endeavour to

guard our hearts and govern our tempers, especially in afflictive seasons, lest we should charge God foolishly. He is always wise and righteous. But we may see every day that *the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart fretteth against the Lord.*

CHAPTER VII.

Elisha in this chapter prophesieth incredible plenty in Samaria, which is brought about by four lepers venturing into the Syrian camp, and reporting to the king their flight; in consequence of which the king, upon receiving intelligence from the men he had sent to inquire into the truth of the account, spoils their tents; the prophecy is fulfilled, and the unbelieving lord trodden to death.—This should be the conclusion of the former chapter, from which it is rather improperly divided.

1 THEN Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, *notwithstanding your profaneness and the idolatry of the court, God will deliver you;* To-morrow about this time [shall] a measure of fine flour [be sold] for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria; *there shall be great plenty, and sold at a low rate in the public market-place.* Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned, *a particular favourite who was always near him,* answered the man of God, and said, *with great contempt,* Behold, [if] the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? *do you think to see it rain corn to morrow? He valued himself on being a free-thinker, and laughing at the ministers of God.* And he said, Behold, thou shalt see [it] with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. *And so it came to pass, the next day the Samaritans were relieved, and this lord destroyed,* ver. 17.

3 And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate; *some say, Gehazi and his three sons:* and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? 4 If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine [is] in the city, and we shall die there, *the city can supply us no longer:* and if we sit still here, we die also, *the besiegers have destroyed all the food without.* Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; *perhaps they may have compas-*

sion upon us when they see our miserable circumstances; and if they kill us, we shall but die, *and it is better to die suddenly by the hand of the enemy, than die a lingering death with hunger.* 5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians; *they set out in the dusk of the evening, and came to the trenches:* and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, [there was] no man there. 6 For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, [even] the noise of a great host, *made by angels, or a sound in their own ears, by his almighty power, which struck a panick into them, for neither the Israelites nor the lepers heard it:* and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, *who lived in the adjacent country,* and the kings of the Egyptians, *or Ethiopians from Africa,* to come upon us; *this was very unlikely, for how could the king of Israel send them intelligence? but they feared where no fear was.* Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, *which carried their baggage,* even the camp as it [was,] and fled for their life; *they thought of nothing but saving themselves.* 8 And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid [it;] and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence [also,] and went and hid [it;] *they first satisfied their hunger, and then hid the treasure; this was quite agreeable to Gehazi's covetous temper.* 9 Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day [is] a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; *it is cruel in us not to inform our distressed brethren:* if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us; *the Syrians may return, or the king of Israel may punish us for concealing this important discovery:* now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. 10 So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, [there was] no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they [were.] 11 And he called the porters, *the king's guard,* and they told [it] to the king's house within; *thus the intelligence came to the king himself.*

12 And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we [be] hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come

out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city; *forgetting or disregarding the prophecy of Elisha, he thought it was a stratagem to draw them out, and then surprise them.* 13 And one of his servants answered and said, Let [some] take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they [are] as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, [I say,] they [are] even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed:) and let us send and see. *The horses and men are almost all consumed with hunger, few of either are left, and those are likely to perish; therefore we shall run no great hazard by sending out a few if they should be taken and destroyed; there is little difference between that and staying here to perish by famine.* 14 They took therefore two chariot horses, and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see; *he would venture no more than two.* 15 And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way [was] full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned and told the king. 16 And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was [sold] for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD; *they found such plenty that there was more than sufficient for those that went out, and they brought it home and sold it to others.*

17 And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate, *being a post of great importance and honour, to see that no disorders were committed, and that they did not leave the city quite naked;* and the people *running out in such crowds to the spoils of the Assyrian camp, threw him down, and* trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. 18 And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: 19 And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, [if] the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. 20 And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died. *This was so remarkable an event that it is here repeated with the prediction, to show the truth both of God's promises and threatenings.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. From hence we infer, that there may be a strict form of religion where there is great wickedness. The lepers were kept out of the gate, and a strict regard was paid to some ceremonies of the law, while idolatry and wickedness were tolerated and countenanced. A remark which we have often occasion to make; and it is very needful, considering how many rest in a form of religion without the power of it.

2. The reasoning of these lepers is applicable to our spiritual concerns, and the method to be taken for the security of our souls. When the hearts of penitents are ready to be overwhelmed with sorrow and despair, let them venture on Christ, and the terms of the gospel; they must perish without him, and can but perish at his feet. He is not an enemy, however Satan and the world may represent him, but a friend. He who applies here, is sure to live. But if there was only a chance or probability, yet surely it is the wisest way. If we must perish, let it be at the feet of Christ, confessing our sins and imploring mercy.

3. See here a remarkable instance of the power of God. The Syrians heard a great noise, which impressed them with fear: a dreadful sound was in their ears; and they fled without inquiring whether there was reason for fear or not. What little reason have we to be afraid of men, when God has so many ways of confounding them and disappointing their most artful devices.

4. It is natural to impart joy, and it is our duty to publish good tidings to others. We should be willing to impart temporal pleasures, that others may share with us; and especially spiritual pleasures; tell them our experience of God's goodness, and the pleasures of religion; tell them our joys and hopes; and say, *O taste and see that the Lord is gracious.*

5. Let us learn, as the chief lesson, the fatal consequence of unbelief. This nobleman thought himself very witty upon the prophet; but he was trodden down as mire in the streets. His greatness, and rank, and the king's favour, were no security to him. Thus men of unbelieving hearts, by despising the word of the Lord, dishonour and displease him; deprive themselves of good, and are wretched at last. They shall view eternal life at a distance; shall see others partake of it, while they miss of it, and are trodden down to hell.

Thus *the rich man lifted up his eyes in torments, seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* They may see, but shall never taste, the heavenly banquet. This will probably be the case of the free-thinkers of our day; who treat the gospel as a cunningly devised fable. They despise the prophets of the Lord, and harden their hearts against the God of heaven; and thus *judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.* Let us humbly submit to the authority of God, and heartily receive his whole will without cavilling or disputing. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be found in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.*

CHAPTER VIII.

Elisha, from a principle of gratitude, here advises his good friend the Shunammite to leave the country, on account of the seven years of famine which were coming upon it; upon her return her land is restored to her; Ben-hadad's death, who is succeeded by Hazael; and Jehoram's wicked reign.

1 THEN spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn; for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years. *As former calamities and deliverances had made little impression, a longer and heavier famine is brought upon them.* 2 And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. *There was plenty, and though the enemies of God and Israel, yet they allowed them to live quietly among them.* 3 And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land*. 4 And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. *It was lawful to talk with a leper at*

* Upon leaving the country, her land was seized by some near relation, or confiscated. There was a strange alteration from what she was before, when she said, *I dwell among my own people.*

a distance; and the king's great curiosity made him not very nice on this occasion. 5 And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this [is] the woman, and this [is] her son, whom Elisha restored to life. 6 And when the king asked the woman, she told him; *she confirmed what Gehazi had said, and perhaps added some circumstances to it.* So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that [was] her's, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land even till now. *He ordered the land to be restored, with an equivalent for all the profit made of it since she left it.*

7 And Elisha came to Damascus, *at the beginning of the famine:* and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither. *The fame of what he had done for Naaman gave the king a great opinion of his power with God;* 8 And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? 9 So Hazael went to meet him, *as he came into the city,* and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him *, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? 10 And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover, *there is nothing in thy disease that is mortal:* howbeit the LORD hath showed me that he shall surely die *by some other means.* 11 And he settled his countenance steadfastly, until he, *Hazael,* was *quite* ashamed *and put out of countenance; perhaps imagining that the prophet suspected something very evil in him:* and the man of God wept †. 12 And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child, *which was the highest degree of barbarous cruelty.* 13 And Hazael said, But what, [is] thy servant a dog,

* This seems to have been only a present of food, which at that time would be very acceptable. It is probable he had some of the sons of the prophets with him.

† Mr. Addison takes notice of this, as a beautiful instance of love to his country, that calamities coming upon it, probably after his time, should afflict him so much.

that he should do this great thing*? And Elisha answered, The LORD hath showed me that thou [shalt be] king over Syria; *and when thou hast power, thou wilt discover thy bloody disposition and hatred to Israel, though others see no probability of it, and thou thinkest thyself not capable of such wickedness.* 14 So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me [that] thou shouldst surely recover. *He said this to keep up the king's spirits, and prevent his suspecting any evil design.* 15 And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped [it] in water, and spread [it] on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead. *His great desire to reign would not suffer him to wait for his master's death; but he despatched him the next morning* †.

16 And in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat [being] then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign‡. 17 Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. 19 Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah, for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, [and] to his children.

20 In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves. 21 So Joram went over to Zair, and all the chariots with him: and he rose by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots: and the people fled into their tents. 22 Yet Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time, *according to Isaac's prophecy,* Gen. xxvii. 40.

23 And the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of

* Some understand this, as if he had said, I am so inconsiderable a creature, that it is not likely I should have power to do it. But it is rather an expression of great abhorrence of such inhumanity and cruelty.

† Josephus says, the king complained of heat, and that Hazael, under pretence of cooling his face, stifled him. Thus he made no noise, there was no signs of violence, and Hazael was not suspected of the murder; upon which he was chosen king, being in great favour with the people and the soldiers. How he behaved, we shall read of hereafter.

‡ For a larger account of Jehoram's wicked reign, see 2 Chron. chap. xxi., which should be read next.

Judah? 24 And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

25 In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign. 26 Two and twenty years old [was] Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel. 27 And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as [did] the house of Ahab: for he [was] the son in law of the house of Ahab.

28 And he went with Joram the son of Ahab to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramoth-gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram. 29 And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

REFLECTIONS.

1. OBSERVE another instance of the power of God over universal nature, and the awfulness of his judgments. That is a remarkable phrase, in *v.* 1., *for the Lord hath called for a famine.* So in Psalm cv. 16., *Moreover he called for a famine on the land; he brake the whole staff of bread.* All calamities are from God, and come at his call, where and when he bids them, and he appoints how long they shall continue. Let us regard his hand in all our calamities and deliverances. They who despise or overlook it, may expect greater and heavier afflictions.

2. Learn how much of the providence of God is to be seen in apparently little contingencies: the Shunammite came in just as Gehazi was telling her story. Those who observe the dealings of God have often seen such things. His wisdom and goodness have timed certain events, so as to make them peculiarly remarkable, and in their consequences peculiarly comfortable and happy. *In the mount of difficulty the Lord is seen.* Psalm cvii. 43. *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.*

3. See how afflictions especially those of sickness, change men's minds. When Ben-hadad was sick, Rimmon was nothing;

he then wanted the help of a prophet; of that same prophet he had sent a detachment to seize and intended to destroy. He now reverences him as a father, and sends him a present. Afflictions show men the vanity of their idols, their riches, and pleasures. Then they will seek God early, have other thoughts of his ministers, and value the counsels and prayers of those whom before they despised. Many have reason to say, *before I was afflicted, I went astray, but since I have kept thy law.*

4. How much may men be mistaken in themselves. They do not know how a change of circumstances may alter their temper and conduct. Hazael expressed great abhorrence at the evil which Elisha prophesied he would do to Israel; but he afterwards did as the prophet had said. Thus men are often shocked at the thoughts of committing some sins, which they afterwards commit with greediness. They think themselves sufficiently armed against temptation, but they know not their own hearts. Let us learn to watch narrowly the workings of the heart; especially to guard against pride, ambition, and the love of pre-eminence, which frequently leads men to commit the worst wickedness to accomplish their ends. Let those who are poor and low, be content, and not desirous of great things. They know not what a snare and mischief prosperity may prove to them, and what injury riches and honours may do them. These things change men's manners, generally for the worse; which is a considerable reason why we should *have our conversation without covetousness,* and *learn in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content.*

CHAPTER IX.

Jehu, being anointed king by a young prophet, is commanded to destroy the house of Ahab; the execution of his commission in the destruction of Joram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel.

1 AND Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead*: 2 And *he*

* Elijah was ordered to anoint Jehu for the destruction of Ahab's family, *see* 1 Kings xix. 16.; but Ahab's humiliation had respited the execution. Elisha was now old, and too well known to execute the commission himself, which required

said to him, When thou comest thither, look out there Jehu, *who is commander in chief,* the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, *the other officers,* and carry him to an inner chamber; 3 Then take the box of oil, and pour [it] on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel*. Then open the door and flee, and tarry not, *lest thou shouldst be taken up for a traitor.*

4 So the young man, [even] the young man the prophet, *with great faith and courage,* went to Ramoth-gilead. 5 And when he came, behold, the captains of the host [were] sitting *in council together; this was a proper season, as it might affect them all, and dispose them to follow Jehu:* and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us And he said, To thee, O captain. 6 And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, [even] over Israel†. 7 And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, *every male,* and him that is shut up and left in Israel: 9 And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah: 10 And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, *that piece of ground where Naboth's vineyard was,* and [there shall be] none to bury [her.] And he opened the door, and fled. *Thus he repeated what Elijah had foretold concerning the destruction of this family,* 1 Kings xxi. 21, *&c.*

11 Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and [one] said unto him, [Is] all well? wherefore came this mad [fellow‡] to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man,

secrecy; he therefore sent one of the students of the college to Ramoth-gilead, which the Israelites had taken, and which was now kept by the army.

* In extraordinary cases, as when the succession was removed, the kings were anointed. By this visible sign Jehu might be the more confirmed in the truth of that message that was brought to him, 1 Kings xix. 16. He was the only king of Israel that was anointed after the division of the ten tribes.

† God did not disown Israel though they were so wicked, but still acted as their king, and appointed them kings or viceroys whom he pleased.

‡ So the idolaters called the prophets. There was something in their dress and manner of living that was uncommon; and his flying with precipitation, and some marks of displeasure, might lead them to use this language.

and his communication; *you must know by his garb and way of speaking that he was a prophet, and had some important message to me, either of advice or reproof; and therefore wave all further inquiry for the present.* 12 And they said, [It is] false, *there was no private message, it was something of a public nature, and therefore they were the more solicitous to know, saying,* Tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel*. 13 Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put [it] under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king. 14 So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, *with the rest of the captains,* conspired against Joram. (Now Joram had kept Ramoth-gilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria; *he had taken it, and kept his army there lest Hazael should attempt to recover it.* 15 But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, If it be your minds, [then] let none go forth [nor] escape out of the city to go to tell [it] in Jezreel; *he wisely complimented them by doing nothing without their advice; but as secrecy and speed were necessary in this business, he advises that none should be suffered to carry intelligence to Joram.*

16 So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram. 17 And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company, *a troop of horse coming.* And Joram said, Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let them say, [Is it] peace? *what news from the Syrians? is all well at Ramoth?* 18 So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, [Is it] peace? And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me; *thus he prevented his carrying any message to the city.* And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again. 19 Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, [Is it] peace? And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. 20 And the watch-

* The spirit of courage came upon Jehu when he was anointed, and he told them the message, and probably showed them the oil that was poured upon him. Upon this God remarkably influenced their hearts, so that immediately they raised him on an eminence like a throne, and put their garments under him, both to raise him and in token of subjection to him; a custom used afterwards among the Greeks and Romans.

man told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving [is] like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously, *for which Jehu was noted.* 21 And Joram, *finding he would deliver an account to none but himself, resolved to go to him; and he* said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite, *in part of Naboth's vineyard; a remarkable providence; enough to make Joram tremble, and Jehu triumph.* 22 And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, [Is it] peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, *the spiritual and corporeal adulteries with which their idolatry was attended,* and her witchcrafts [are so] many? *her methods of deceit, in which he joined her, and both tolerated and countenanced them.* 23 And Joram turned his hands, *the hands of him who drove the chariot, to return to the city,* and fled, and said to Ahaziah, [There is] treachery, O Ahaziah. 24 And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, *as he fled from him,* and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot. 25 Then said [Jehu] to Bidkar his captain, Take up, [and] cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, *when we attended Ahab in state to take possession of this vineyard,* the LORD laid this burden upon him; *threatened him with this punishment by the prophet Elijah.* 26 Surely, I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, *who were slain to prevent their making any claim to it,* saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take [and] cast him into the plat [of ground,] according to the word of the LORD; *and he was accordingly thrown there without any kind of burial.*

27 But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw [this,] he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. [And they did so] at the going up to Gur, which [is] by Ibleam*. And he fled to Megiddo *in Samaria,* and died there; *he fled to Megiddo, from thence he was brought to Jehu at Jezreel, and by his sentence was slain,* 2 Chron. xxii. 9. 28 And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his

* Jehu had no charge to destroy him; but as he was joined in affinity and iniquity with the house of Ahab, he thought he was included.

fathers in the city of David, *because he was the grandson of good Jehoshaphat, see* 2 Chron. xxii. 9. 29 And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah.

30 And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard [of it;] and *instead of clothing herself in sackcloth, and praying for mercy,* she painted her *wrinkled* face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window, *resolving to keep up her dignity and state; thinking perhaps that her sex would secure her, and her majesty daunt him.* 31 And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said *to him,* [Had] Zimri peace, who slew his master *Bausha?* 1 Kings xvi. 18 *. 32 And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who [is] on my side? who? And there looked out to him two [or] three eunuchs, *who were chamberlains or pages.* 33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down, *to gratify their revenge on their haughty mistress, or to gain favour with Jehu;* and [some] of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. 34 And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed [woman,] and bury her: for she [is] a king's daughter; *the daughter of the king of Sidon,* 1 Kings xvi. 31. 35 And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the scull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. *She was so ill beloved that nobody had taken care of her carcass, and the dogs had eaten all the rest;* 36 Wherefore they came again and told him. And he said, This [is] the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel; *he then recollected the words of Elijah, in* 1 Kings xxi. 23. 37 And the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel †; [so] that they shall not say, This [is] Jezebel; *there was no monument, no children, nothing to keep up her memory. It was a great aggravation of the sins of Jehu afterwards, that he entered on his reign with an opportunity of remarking the variety of God's threatenings, and the terror of his vengeance against idolatry; yet he followed the sins of Jeroboam, though God had mentioned that prince,* ver. 9., *as a most miserable and infamous person.*

* Zimri, when he was besieged by Omri, burned himself and the house. But the case was not parallel. Zimri did it out of ambition, Jehu by the divine command.

† Perhaps there is a reference here to the name of Jezebel, which signifies *as dung.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. Observe again how God disposes of kingdoms and hearts as he pleases. He gave the kingdom to Jehu; united the hearts of captains and soldiers to him, without envy or any opposition. He raiseth up and putteth down princes, and influenceth the spirits of men to bring about his own purposes. Let us reverence him, *who doeth as he pleaseth among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth.*

2. It becomes us to use despatch, and show intrepid resolution in the execution of the divine commands. This young prophet took a long and hazardous journey to execute the divine commission intrusted to him. We have now no such extraordinary authority; but whatever we know to be the will of God, should be despatched with steady resolution and purpose of heart. *Fear not; have not I commanded thee?* is sufficient to gain all the vigour and activity of our souls.

3. We learn that the blood of God's servants and prophets is precious in his sight, and that he will avenge it. Ahab's house was notoriously wicked in many instances; but this great iniquity filled up the measure of it, as mentioned, *v.* 7., *And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel.* When the Lord cometh to punish the inhabitants of the world, *he will make inquisition for blood;* and those *who have made themselves drunk with the blood of the saints, shall have a cup of trembling put into their hands,* and meet with awful tokens of the divine displeasure.

4. It is not uncommon for the best of men to be accounted mad. So the prophets were treated; so was Christ himself, and John the Baptist, as a poor, melancholy man. This is often the case, and none who are acquainted with the wisdom of this world will think it strange. *But if we are beside ourselves, it is to God;* and the reproach of the wicked is not worth regarding. *They think it strange that we run not with them to the same excess of riot,* and reproach us for it. *So treated they the prophets.*

5. We learn that the way of sin can never be the way of peace. *What hast thou to do with peace?* says Jehu, *v.* 19. They think to find peace and safety in their evil way, but what peace can

there be, while God is dishonoured and affronted, and religion neglected? What peace with him, or with conscience; what peace in life or death, for those who *obey not God*, and fight against conscience? Men may amuse themselves with hope, and trust to a false peace; but *there is no peace*, saith God, *to the wicked.*

6. *The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.* This remarkable series of awful events, was fulfilling the word of the Lord delivered many years before. *Not one word of his shall fall to the ground.* Ahaziah was a partaker in the sin, and for that reason a partaker of the plague; the threatenings which seemed to be forgotten, were all accomplished, even to the very circumstance of place, at Jezreel, and in Naboth's vineyard, and in the dogs destroying Jezebel. God will have a time of reckoning with sinners, though they may flourish long in their iniquities. The miserable end of Jezebel is very affecting and instructive. In the midst of ever so much pride, cruelty, and idolatry, sinners, can never out-face or out-brave the judgments of God. Thus will the enemies of God perish. Thus shall Rome, that spiritual Jezebel, that mother of harlots, and abomination of the earth, be destroyed. The execution of these threatenings in the instances before us, confirm our faith in that great event which revelation declares; *for strong and righteous is the Lord who judgeth her.*

CHAPTER X.

An account of the execution done upon Ahab's family and the worshippers of Baal; with Jehu's character and reign.

1 AND Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria, *grandsons or nephews, who amidst the confusion fled to Samaria for safety.* And Jehu wrote letters, and sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab's [children,] *to the chief persons and officers of the court, who had the care of the royal family and had fled with them for their greater security,* saying, 2 Now as soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master's sons [are] with you, and [there are] with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour; 3 Look even out the best and meetest of your master's sons, and set [him] on his

father's throne, and fight for your master's house*. 4 But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand? 5 And he that [was] over the house, and he that [was] over the city, the elders also, and the bringers up [of the children,] sent to Jehu, saying, We [are] thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou [that which is] good in thine eyes. *This was a cowardly surrender; determining to submit at pleasure, and do as he would have them.* 6 Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If ye [be] mine, and [if] ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to-morrow this time. Now the king's sons, [being] seventy persons, [were] with the great men of the city, which brought them up. 7 And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they *instantly obeyed the orders, and* took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him [them] to Jezreel. 8 And there came a messenger, and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. And, *it being late at night,* he said, Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate until the morning. 9 And it came to pass in the morning, that he went out, and stood, and said to all the people, *who were met together to view this strange spectacle, and to be witnesses of the dreadful judgment of God upon Ahab's house, because of their idolatry and cruelty,* Ye [be] righteous, *ye have had no hand in this, and therefore you need not fear any mischief:* behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all these? *other hands have slain these young men; yet it is done in obedience to the divine command, and is the execution of the divine sentence.* 10 Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the LORD hath done [that] which he spake by his servant Elijah. 11 So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining *in Jezreel; but there was some still in Samaria, see* ver. 17†.

12 And, *having finished his work in Jezreel,* he arose and departed, and came to Samaria. 13 [And] as he [was] at the

* Perhaps Jehu knew they were consulting about a successor; and sent them this ironical message, or contemptuous defiance, not doubting but he was able to deal with the greatest of them.

† Probably some of these were the very persons who executed Naboth by Jezebel's orders; and thus their evil doings came upon their own heads.

shearing house in the way, 13 Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, Who [are] ye? And they answered, We [are] the brethren of Ahaziah, *his nephews, as we read* 2 Chron. xxii. 8., and we go down to salute the children of the king, and the children of the queen; *knowing nothing of what had happened they came to attend their uncle back, and pay their respects to the royal family, to which they were related.* 14 And he said, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and slew them at the pit of the shearing house, [even] two and forty men; neither left he any of them.

15 And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab [coming] to meet him*: and he saluted him, and said unto him, Is thine heart right, as my heart [is] with thy heart? *dost thou as sincerely love me and approve of my actions, as I love and respect thee?* And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give [me] thine hand *in token of thy affection.* And he gave [him] his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot. 16 And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD; *my zeal for his honour, and desire to fulfil his commands.* So they made him ride in his chariot. 17 And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah. 18 And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; [but] Jehu shall serve him much; *he pretended his quarrel was not with Baal, but with Ahab's family.* 19 Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice [to do] to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live; *he thought that, considering the destruction of Ahab's family, they might be afraid to come, and therefore threatens them.* But Jehu did [it] in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal; *but whatever his intention was, it was a wicked artifice that he made use of.* 20 And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed [it.] 21 And Jehu sent through all Israel: and

* He was a person of great piety and eminence in Israel; a Kenite, and a descendant of Jethro. He imposed upon his sons an austere life, that they should drink no wine, nor live in cities, (see Jer. xxxv. 6—8.), but be shepherds in the country, lest they should be corrupted in those luxurious and idolatrous times. This pious and eminent person, hearing what Jehu had done in obedience to God's commands, came to congratulate him, and encourage him to extirpate idolatry. Jehu thinking a person of his character and reputation would add weight and acceptance to what he was doing, especially among the pious Israelites, addressed him in the most friendly manner.

all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another, *including the court, which might hold a great number.* 22 And he said unto him that [was] over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. 23 And he brought them forth vestments*. 23 And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only, *lest the sacrifice should be profaned by others.* 24 And when they went in to offer sacrifices, and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, [If] any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, [he that letteth him go,] his life [shall be] for the life of him. 25 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, [and] slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast [them] out, and went to the city of the house of Baal, *a place where the prophets and priests of Baal lived; the buildings of which were numerous, and it was a kind of city.* 26 And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them. 27 And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house, *or common sewer,* unto this day. 28 Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel; *so that he was never worshipped there any more. The work was good, but the manner of conducting it was wrong and scandalous.*

29 Howbeit [from] the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, [to wit,] the golden calves that [were] in Beth-el, and that [were] in Dan; *he worshipped those, lest the people should return to Jerusalem.* 30 And the LORD said unto Jehu, *by some prophet,* Because thou hast done well in executing [that which is] right in mine eyes, [and] hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that [was] in mine heart, thy children of the fourth [generation] shall sit on the throne of Israel. *Thus God was pleased to reward his partial obedience.* 31 But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law

* These were badges of distinction, or rather, as Costard supposes, little tents, in which they had infamous commerce with women, who prostituted themselves in honour of Baal. Hence we so often read of whoredoms when idolatry is mentioned.

of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin; *his policy got the better of his religion.*

32 In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; 33 From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which [is] by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan*.

34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 35 And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead. 36 And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria [was] twenty and eight years.

REFLECTIONS.

1. OBSERVE how soon the most numerous families may be made desolate by the judgments of God. The royal house of David was large, and seemingly in no danger of wanting successors; but it is here said all were cut off. *Children are an heritage of the Lord.* Psalm cxxvii. 3. Parents should rejoice over them with trembling; be careful to instruct them; and entail the best blessings upon them. Sin soon cuts off families; but *the just man walketh in his integrity, and is preserved.*

2. We learn how suddenly death may overtake those who think themselves most secure, as in the instances of Ahab's grandsons, Ahaziah's nephews, and Baal's worshippers; none of whom apprehended any danger. God gives no such commissions now, but the lives of men are not secure from fraud and cruelty. We should always consider life as uncertain, and *be always ready. In the midst of life we are in death.* It is too great a venture to go abroad at any time without the soul prepared for heaven.

3. Let us adore the justice of God, in taking off these idolatrous sinners in the very act of sin. The vilest idolatry and all sorts of lewdness and unnatural lusts were practised in those rites, such as corrupt every good principle and affection; and this pre-

* Hazael took the frontier towns, and all the land beyond Jordan, and committed terrible ravages, agreeably to what Elisha had foretold, and for which Hazael was threatened in Amos i. 3, 4. Jehu had no success against him, because his heart was not right with God. Nevertheless he reigned longer than any of the kings of Israel had done before him.

vailed so generally, that only seven thousand men were found in all Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It was righteous in God, worthy his character as the moral governor of the world, and necessary for the peace and happiness of the community, that such evil should be remedied. And how? there was no way but by a thorough execution.

4. The great lesson to be learned is, to guard against partial obedience and subjection to God. Jehu's zeal had many faults, and much fraud and falsehood mingled with it. Zeal is good; but *Come, see my zeal,* spoiled all. Upon the whole, it was neither hearty nor universal; he retained his favourite idolatry, and worshipped the calves. Thus many perform some acts of religion, while they neglect others; part with some sins, but keep those which are most gainful, most pleasing, or most secret. Let us see that our hearts be right, and take heed to walk in the law of God with a perfect heart. Without care, we shall err, and turn aside from the holy commandment. May we therefore walk circumspectly in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

5. If God rewards partial obedience, how much more will he approve that which is universal, *v.* 30. *And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.* God will not be wanting to any of his creatures. He may reward some acts of obedience with temporal prosperity; though he will at last punish the hypocrite. But when the heart is right, and obedience is entire and universal, according to the tenor of the gospel, such shall have a glorious and everlasting reward. In every respect God will show that he is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in him.

CHAPTER XI.

An account of the wonderful preservation of Joash from Athaliah's cruelty; the method Jehoiada took to set him upon the throne; the death of the usurper; the establishment of Joash; and the reformation begun.

1 AND when Athaliah, *the widow of Joram king of Judah, the daughter of Ahab, and* the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, *that Jehu had slain her son and the royal family of Israel, she formed the desperate resolution to revenge it on the house of David, and* she arose and destroyed all the seed royal, *Joram's children by another wife, all princes of the blood*.* 2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram *by another wife,* sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons [which were] slain; *they carried him off wounded, but not dead, though Athaliah concluded him to be so;* and they, *Jehosheba and her husband Jehoiada the high priest,* hid him, [even] him and his nurse, in the bedchamber *belonging to the high priest,* from Athaliah, so that he was not slain. 3 And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land, *and established idolatry again.*

4 And the seventh year Jehoiada sent *privately* and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, *who were well affected to the house of David, and friends to true religion,* and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath *of fidelity and secrecy* of them in the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son †. 5 And he commanded them, saying, This [is] the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house ‡;

* She perhaps was afraid lest Jehu should kill her because she was of Ahab's family; and therefore destroyed the royal family and attempted to get into the throne. She had some sons of her own by another husband, to whom she hoped to leave the crown. 2 Chron. xxiv. 7.

† This must be a pleasing surprise to the good people of Israel, who thought the royal family was extinct; and the promise of God, that David should never want a successor, had failed.

‡ For these purposes so many priests and Levites were appointed weekly in rotation; a new course came on every sabbath day morning, and the old went out on the sabbath day evening; therefore both attended the service of that solemn day. One part was to guard the king's house, where he lived and was educated.

6 And a third part [shall be] at the gate of Sur, *the east gate, which opened toward the city, that there might be no disturbance from thence;* and a third part at the gate behind the guard, *the south gate which led to the palace, and where a guard was kept:* so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down; *that none of Athaliah's guard should break in to surprise them.* 7 And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, *who have finished your course and so have liberty to return home,* even they shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD about the king, *they were detained to be a guard about the king's person; probably a third part were let go to prevent suspicion.* 8 And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, *either the rails of the temple, or the ranks who were set to guard the king,* let him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in. 9 And the captains over the hundreds did according to all [things] that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest; *they followed the high priest, and came without arms, lest it should have raised a suspicion.* 10 And to the captains over hundreds did the priests give king David's spears and shields, that [were] in the temple of the LORD; *the arms David had dedicated to God as a memorial, or spoils which he had taken; though perhaps they were almost worn out, or were old fashioned, it would give them spirit to use them, when undertaking the cause of the house of David.* 11 And the guard stood every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, [along] by the altar and the temple. 12 And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and [gave him] the testimony, *or law of God, which he was to read and study, and by the rules of which he was to live and govern;* and they made him king, and anointed him*; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

13 And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard [and] of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD. *It was carried on so secretly, that she knew nothing of it till she heard the shouting, and came in a fret to see what was the matter.* 14 And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as

* This was done by Jehoiada and his sons, one of whom he afterwards ungratefully slew, 2 Chron. xxiii. 11.

the manner [was,] *on the brasen scaffold, which Solomon used at the dedication, and on which the kings stood when they were inaugurated,* and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets, *and praised God for restoring the royal family,* 2 Chron. xxiii. 13., and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, Treason. 15 But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges, *carry her out of the limits of the temple:* and him that followeth her kill with the sword; *destroy her and all who adhere to her.* For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD. *Hearing this, she fled in haste towards the palace, through the stables.* 16 And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house; and there was she slain; *in a public place, and in an ignominious manner, as her mother Jezebel was before.*

17 And Jehoiada, *who was regent during the king's minority, took the first opportunity, now the people were pleased and thankful, to promote the observation of the divine law; and he* made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people; *the king and the people entered into a solemn covenant to keep the commandment of Jehovah, and to root out idolatry; and another covenant* between the king also and the people, *in which he engaged to rule by the divine law, and they to be dutiful subjects.* 18 And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars, *where he had fled for refuge.* And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD, *that no unclean person should enter into it.* 19 And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings. 20 And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet; *they rejoiced in what Jehoiada had done, and the happy prospect before them; and no one appeared in defence of the usurper, or gave the new king any disturbance:* and they slew Athaliah with the sword [beside] the king's house. 21 Seven years old [was] Jehoash when he began to reign*.

* It will be proper to read next the twenty-fourth chapter of the 2 Chronicles.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We see what dreadful work ambition makes in the world. This wicked woman, to gratify her revenge, or rather her ambition, destroyed all the royal house of Israel she could meet with. The calamity of families had no effect upon her. A love of power, pre-eminence and dominion, opens a door to all manner of wickedness. Where pride and ambition gain the ascendency, nothing is thought too bad for men or women to be guilty of.

2. We learn what peculiar calamity and distress great families are often subject to. It were better to have been descended from the meanest tradesman or labourer in Israel, than to be of the royal family. When we are ready to envy those who are in high stations, we should remember *they are set in slippery places.* There is more security, as well as more comfort, among people in the middle stations of life.

3. We learn what a blessing one child, wisely married, may be to a good family. It was rather strange that Joram should marry his daughter to the high priest. But Providence ordered it so, that he might save his family from utter destruction. The good high priest and his son saved one, as a brand from the burning. This circumstance should make parents solicitous that their children may be allied to those who are wise and good; from whom they may expect help and assistance in such circumstances of difficulty and danger, when others not thus allied may forsake them, or their own near relations prove unnatural.

4. On how small a thread does the accomplishment of divine promises sometimes depend. All God's declarations in favour of the house of David depended on this one little child, a year old, saved from the sword of his grandmother. The good people of Israel thought the house of David was extinct. *But no word of God shall fall to the ground;* nor shall any scheme of men make his promise of none effect.

5. From the joy the people expressed in this great revolution, let us reflect what reason there is for joy and thankfulness when Satan is deposed, and Christ is enthroned in the heart; when Satan the usurper is put down, and the soul gives itself up to Christ, and receives him as king; when confusion and disorder are changed for piety and peace. Oh glorious, happy change!

Hosannah to the Son of David! blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord!

6. How wise and prudent is it to engage men to enter into a solemn covenant, when the heart is peculiarly impressed with the goodness of God, as Jehoiada here did. Public reformation is best promoted when the memory of deliverances is fresh, and every heart is full of joy. Ministers and people should learn hence when they see young men thoughtful and considerate, narrowly escaped from danger and death, to remind them of their obligations to be the Lord's, and to devote themselves to him. Happy are those who have such wise, useful guides, as Jehoiada was, if they are sensible of their happiness; and happy are the people who have *joined themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.*

CHAPTER XII.

An account of the good reign of Jehoash during the days of Jehoiada; he is afterwards slain by his servants.

1 IN the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2 And Jehoash did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. 3 But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

4 And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, [even] the money of every one that passeth [the account,] the money that every man is set at, [and] all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD, let the priests take [it] to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found. 6 But it was [so, that] in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. 7 Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the [other] priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no [more] money

of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. 8 And the priests consented to receive no [more] money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house. 9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money [that was] brought into the house of the LORD. 10 And it was [so,] when they saw that [there was] much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money [that was] found in the house of the LORD. 11 And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the LORD, 12 And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD; and for all that was laid out for the house to repair [it.] 13 Howbeit there were not made for the house of the LORD bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money [that was] brought into the house of the LORD: 14 But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD. 15 Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully. 16 The trespass money and sin money was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'.

17 Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem. 18 And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold [that was] found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent [it] to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem.

19 And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 20 And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Joash in the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla. 21 For Jozachar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, smote him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XIII.

The reign of Jehoahaz and of his son Joash; and the death of Elisha.

1 IN the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] seventeen years. 2 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom; *he was not reclaimed by the calamities brought on him and his family.*

3 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael all [their] days; *rather, every day; he was continually doing it by their making incursions upon them, and frequent advantages gained against them.* 4 And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, *probably on some public humiliation,* and the LORD hearkened unto him, *because of his pious ancestors,* ver. 23., for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them. 5 (And the LORD gave Israel a saviour, *the present king's son, (as we read afterwards),* so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime; *securely and quietly in the country, as well as in the fortified cities.* 6 Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, [but] walked therein; *neither their miseries nor God's mercy had any effect upon them:* and their remained the grove also *which Ahab had planted* in Samaria.) 7 Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; *he had very few soldiers; war and captivity had reduced them to so inconsiderable a number*; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing; *weak and contemptible, so that they were unable to oppose him. It does not appear that there was any defect of courage in the king; but it was the righteous judgment of God upon him, because he was wicked.*

8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 9 And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead.

10 In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] sixteen years. 11 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: [but] he walked therein. 12 And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 13 And Joash slept with his fathers: and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel*.

14 Now Elisha was fallen sick, of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, *not out of love to the prophet, or else he would have reformed; but from a concern that Israel should lose its glory and defence, while the Syrians probably were ravaging the country;* and *he* said, *in the very same words that Elisha used when Elijah was taken away,* O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof; *because by his counsels and prayers he had obtained them many victories.* 15 And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. 16 And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand [upon it:] and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands; *his weak and wasted arms, to show that he should have deliverance, which was not to be ascribed to their valour, but to the power of God.* 17 And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened [it†.] Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; *a sign that the Lord would give deliverance:* for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, *or, as some render it, thou shalt smite them mightily,* till thou have consumed [them;] *till all their forces with which they infested the land are destroyed.* 18 And he said, Take the arrows. And he took [them.] *Having by the former sign showed that he should overcome the Syrians, by another he should show him how often he should overcome them.* And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed‡.

* These verses contain only a general account of the reigns of Joash and of his successor Jeroboam; but some particular facts, worthy of notice, are recorded in v. 14.

† Samaria lay north-east, and they had taken all the rest of the land beyond Jordan, chap. x. 33.

‡ There was probably something in the manner or the word of the prophet,

19 And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed [it:] whereas now thou shalt smite Syria [but] thrice.

20 And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. 21 And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that behold, they spied a band [of men;] and, *for fear of being surprised,* they *rolled away the stone, and* cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha *in haste:* and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet*.

22 But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet; *he remembered his covenant and gave them time to repent.* 24 So Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead. 25 And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war; *he re-took all the country beyond Jordan.* Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel, *according to the promise. Probably he was unwilling to enter on a fourth action, in which there was no reason to expect equal success*†.

REFLECTIONS.

1. As sin is the cause of chastisement, so humiliation and prayer are the means of deliverance, *v.* 3, 4. This is applicable to society in general, and to private persons. *For their iniquity was I wroth, and smote them.* Let such humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and call upon him in the day of trouble. This is the appointed way to obtain deliverance and salvation.

which intimated that he should have smitten the ground oftener: but he stopped then, probably thinking he had done enough to humour the old prophet, in what he thought a silly action.

* This was the highest honour to the prophet's memory; it confirmed the truth of what he had promised to the king, and encouraged the belief of a future state; and it showed also, that what the prophet had done in raising the dead, was not by his own power, but by the power of God. The use which the Church of Rome has made of this story, to encourage the worship of relics, is too ridiculous to be confuted.

† After this chapter, 2 Chron. chapter xxv. may be read.

2. The loss of good men, especially of good prophets and instructors of youth, is greatly to be lamented. They are *better than chariots and horsemen.* It is better to lose men of war, than men of God. They are the ornament and support of a nation; they are highly to be valued, and greatly to be lamented. When they are taken away we should mourn for ourselves, not for them; we should be concerned to rise up in their stead, and pray that others may do so.

3. It is our own fault if spiritual enemies are not smitten and subdued. It is owing to our sloth; we take no pains to watch, and pray, and strive; and do not believe the gracious promises of God. The more vigorously we attack them, and the more firmly we depend on divine promises, the more successful we are like to be. *We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers: if we resist them steadfast in the faith, they will flee from us;* and we shall be *more than conquerors through Him that loved us.* It is a grief to all good men to see others losing the victory, for want of faith, zeal, and resolution. Therefore let us stir up ourselves and one another; and *fight the good fight of faith.*

4. All deliverance and success, in temporal and spiritual concerns, is owing to the grace and compassion of God. *v.* 23., *And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them.* Here are several instructive and delightful phrases. He was gracious to them, had compassion upon them, had respect unto them, and remembered his covenant. He was willing to find out a reason to be long-suffering and gracious to this rebellious people. This is great encouragement to sinners to repent. God bears long with them. *He is not willing that any should perish. With him is forgiveness, that he may be feared.* The goodness of God should lead us to repentance and amendment, since we are not cast away from his presence, but may enjoy the favourable tokens of it now and for ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

Amaziah's good reign; he is slain by a conspiracy; and is succeeded by Azariah.

1 IN the second year of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel reigned Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah. 2 He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 3 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did. 4 Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice and burn incense on the high places. 5 And it came to pass, as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, that he slew his servants which had slain the king his father. 6 But the children of the murderers he slew not: according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin. 7 He slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day.

8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face. 9 And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that [was] in Lebanon sent to the cedar that [was] in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that [was] in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle. 10 Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory [of this,] and tarry at home: for why shouldst thou meddle to [thy] hurt, that thou shouldst fall, [even] thou, and Judah with thee? 11 But Amaziah would not hear. Therefore Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shemesh, which [belongeth] to Judah. 12 And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to their tents. 13 And Jehoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah,

at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits. 14 And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels [that were] found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

15 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 16 And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead.

17 And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years. 18 And the rest of the acts of Amaziah, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 19 Now they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem: and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there. 20 And they brought him on horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.

21 And all the people of Judah took Azariah, which [was] sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. 22 He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam *the second*, the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, [and reigned] forty and one years; *he reigned longer than any of the kings of Israel**. 24 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin; *as he bore his name, so he followed his bad example.* 25 He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, *he re-took the country which had been taken from his predecessor*, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which [was] of Gath-hepher; *he was encouraged in this war by the prophet Jonah, who assured him of success.* 26 For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, [that it was] very bitter: for [there was] not any shut up, nor any left, nor any

* In his time Hosea and Amos prophesied; and many passages in their prophecies show, that the most shameful idolatries and debaucheries were practised among the Israelites at this time.

helper for Israel. *The reason of this was the divine compassion; there were but few people in the fenced cities or in the country, all were greatly depopulated.* 27 And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash; *he would not destroy them yet, and therefore saved them by the hand of this wicked prince.*

28 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, [which belonged] to Judah, for Israel, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 29 And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, [even] with the kings of Israel; and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XV.

Azariah's good reign; he is succeeded by Jotham; and his good reign.

IN the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. 2 Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Jecholiah of Jerusalem. 3 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; 4 Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.

5 And the LORD smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house. And Jotham the king's son [was] over the house, judging the people of the land. 6 And the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 7 So Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

8 *In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did

* This part of the history comes in between the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of 2 Chronicles. There is great disorder in the dates when these kings began to reign; but this is common in times of confusion. So the reign of Charles the second is sometimes reckoned from his restoration 1660, and sometimes from the year 1648, when his father was beheaded.

Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months. 9 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 10 And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead*. 11 And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they [are] written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 12 This [was] the word of the LORD which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth [generation.] And so it came to pass. *Herein God showed himself faithful to his engagements.*

13 Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah† king of Judah, and he reigned a full month in Samaria. 14 For Menahem the son of Gadi, *hearing that Shallum had slain Zachariah, and usurped the kingdom, determined to dispute his title to it; and he* went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. 15 And the rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they [are] written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 16 Then Menahem smote Tiphsah, and all that [were] therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not [to him,] therefore he smote [it; and] all the women therein that were with child he ripped up. *He began his reign with acts of the greatest injustice and cruelty; for when he came back to the place where the army lay, the city refusing to own his title to the kingdom, he smote it, and was guilty of the most horrible barbarity; by which he intended to intimidate others and prevent any future resistance.*

17 In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, [and reigned] ten years in Samaria. 18 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

19 [And] Pul the king of Assyria came against the land‡: and

* Who Shallum was, and what his pretence for this conspiracy, is not related. It seems that the king was secretly hated, and that many were engaged in it; that they destroyed the king publicly; and thus the prophecy, in Amos vii. 9., was accomplished.

† In Matthew i. 8, 9. he is called Ozias; and ver. 1. of this chapter, Azariah.

‡ We read, in 1 Chron. v. 26., that before this he had taken these captive beyond Jordan. Sir Isaac Newton is of opinion that this Pul was the founder o

Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand; *to turn back his army and purchase his friendship.* 20 And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, [even] of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver*, to give to the king of Assyria; *to ingratiate himself with the common people, he laid this tax on the great men.* So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

21 And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 22 And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead.

23 In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] two years. 24 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 25 But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, *as his father had done against Shallum,* and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieh, *two eminent courtiers who were about the king,* and with him fifty men of the Gileadites, *who were the king's guards:* and he killed him, and reigned in his room. 26 And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they [are] written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

27 In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] twenty years. 28 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, *the son of Pul, called by heathen historians, Arbaces,* and took Ijon and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. *This was the second time that some of the Israelites were carried captive; he now took two tribes within Jordan.*

30 And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in

the Assyrian empire; and was probably the king of Nineveh, to whom Jonah was sent; (see his history in PRIDEAUX's *Connect.*) at this period his history began.

* About six pounds five shillings each; the whole amounted to near three hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds.

his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. *The reason seems to have been, his expedition against Judah, of which we afterwards read; and thus exposing his kingdom to the ravages of the Assyrians.* 31 And the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they [are] written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

32 In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign. 33 Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. 34 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. 35 Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD.

36 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 37 In those days the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah. 38 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead. *See* 2 Chron. xxvii. *chapter, and the reflections there.*

CHAPTER XVI.

Compared with 2 Chron. xxviii.

The general character of Ahaz; he is attacked by Rezin and Pekah, and sends to Assyria for help; he adopts their idolatry; destroys the temple worship; and dying ingloriously, is succeeded by good Hezekiah.

1 IN the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign; *his history requires peculiar attention, in order to understand the prophecies, especially that of Isaiah, who lived at this time.* 2 Twenty years old [was] Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father; *he was the worst king that Judah ever had, and the more inexcusable for having had so*

good a father. 3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, *he was as idolatrous as they,* yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel *. 4 And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree, *not to Jehovah, but to idols; or some imaginary deities whom they supposed inhabited the groves.*

5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome [him.] *This was the first attempt to take and plunder Jerusalem, but was ineffectual,* Isaiah vii. 7. *God promised it should not succeed. What follows seems to be another expedition, having divided their forces.* 6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day†. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I [am] thy servant and thy son, *I will hold my kingdom by thy favour, and pay thee tribute:* come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. 8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent [it for] a present to the king of Assyria. 9 And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried [the people of] it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin. *This so far succeeded, that he made an excursion in his favour; took Damascus and slew the king,* Amos i. 3. 5., *and thereby put an end to the Syrian monarchy*‡.

* It is said in Chronicles that he burnt his children. The worship of Moloch began in Judah now. Whether the children were burnt or only passed between two fires, it was designed as a kind of purification or dedication to their god. He was the first prince of Judah who was guilty of such abominable practices, like the Canaanites. His predecessors only tolerated idolatry; but he encouraged it, and attended himself.

† This was a port on the Red sea, which Ahaz's grandfather had recovered to Judah; and from whence they went to the Indies for gold. Here 2 Chron. xxviii. 1—21. may be properly introduced.

‡ It is said, in 2 Chronicles xxviii. 21., that *he helped him not;* his sending to the king of Assyria was a mischief rather than a benefit, for though he delivered him from Damascus, yet not from the Edomites or Philistines. He exhausted his treasure, destroyed the Israelites, and opened his way to Judah. So that upon the whole he left him worse than he found him, especially as he had lost Elath, and with it all the East India trade, which supplied them with gold.

This seeming contradiction is illustrated by what happened in our own nation. The Britons called in the Saxons to help them against the Romans; who came, and assisted them for a while, but got for themselves the dominion of the country at last.

10 And king Ahaz went to Damascus, to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, *to compliment him on his success, and do him homage,* and saw an altar that [was] at Damascus, *which struck his fancy:* and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof; *not only of its shape, but of all its carvings and decorations.* 11 And Urijah built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made [it] against king Ahaz came from Damascus; *he weakly and wickedly complied, in direct opposition to the law of God.* 12 And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar and offered thereon. 13 And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar. *He offered the sacrifice appointed by Moses, but in an irregular manner, and to the wrong object, even to the Syrian deities,* 2 Chron. xxviii. 23. 14 And he brought also the brasen altar, which [was] before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar; *put it in the place of God's altar.* 15 And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great *new* altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice, *all public sacrifices;* and the brasen altar shall be for me to inquire [by,] *for my own private use.* 16 Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

17 And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brasen oxen that [were] under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones; *intending to abolish the temple worship.* 18 And the covert* for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the

* This was a canopy or cloth of state, which covered the throne on which the king sat on the sabbath and other public solemnities, and the way to that throne, which had some peculiar ornaments. These he sent to the king of Assyria. Or, as some interpret it, he defaced the ornaments and stopped up this way; to show that he would have no further commerce with the temple. And all this was done to ingratiate himself with the king of Assyria. *This is that king Ahaz*, that most notorious offender, who never did any good, who never prospered in any attempt, who shut up the doors of God's house, who cut in pieces the vessels, who built altars in every corner of Jerusalem, and who sacrificed to the gods of Syria, though they could not help the Syrians themselves. This proved the ruin of him and all Israel, 2 Chron. xxviii.

king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD for the king of Assyria.

19 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 20 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, *but not in the sepulchre of the kings, because of his idolatry:* and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

REFLECTIONS *.

1. REFLECTIONS on our own imperfections and guilt, should make us candid and merciful to our brethren. Oded did not take every advantage of them and treat them with severity. 2 Chron. xxviii. 9—11. When we are tempted to revenge, to continue our enmity, or find ourselves backward to submit for peace' sake, or to make up differences, let us ask ourselves, *Is there not with me, even with me, sins against the Lord my God? If he was strict to mark, or severe to punish, we could not stand before him, nor answer for one sin of a thousand.* His eyes are upon our ways; he loveth peace and mercy; he *hath judgment without mercy for him that showeth no mercy,* James ii. 13.

2. How fond are men of their own inventions in the worship of God. Solomon's altar was a plain, old-fashioned one. Ahaz would have something new and fine; he wanted more show and ornament. This is often the case in christian churches. Christ's institutions are plain and simple, too much so for superstitious men. They must add sacraments and rites of their own, and impose them upon all worshippers. All innovations are dangerous, even in the circumstantials of divine worship. Adding ornaments to religious services, is generally spoiling them. The nearer we keep to the divine pattern the better.

3. The treachery and cowardice of Urijah the priest were highly scandalous. To ingratiate himself with the king, he makes his altar, offers sacrifices upon it, and submits to those subversions and profanations of the divine appointments, contrary to the law of God, and his duty as a priest. When those who should reprove great men for their sin, partake with them, or connive at their irregularity, it is a melancholy thing. Let us pray that our ministers may have more zeal and courage to adhere or return to

* These reflections may also be read after 2 Chron. chap. xxviii.

his institutions, whatever princes or great men may command or desire. Once more,

4. Those who in their distresses trespass more against the Lord, are abominably, and, it is to be feared, incurably, wicked. *This is that king Ahaz;* his name has a mark of infamy upon it. Afflictions are intended to bring men to thought, to repentance, and amendment; but if they are made worse instead of better by them, it is a sign of great hardness of heart, and that they are in the broad way to ruin. Let it be our concern to keep our consciences tender, to humble ourselves under God's hand, and improve our afflictions aright; that by *the sorrow of the countenance the heart may be made better.*

CHAPTER XVII.

The reign of Hoshea; the captivity of the ten tribes for their sins; and the religion which their successors in the land set up.

1 IN the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years*. 2 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him; *he was not quite so bad, for we find in the history of Hezekiah, that he did not hinder the people from going to Jerusalem.* 3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria, *the son of Tiglath-pileser;* and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents, *became tributary to him.* 4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, *he refused paying the tribute:* for he had sent messengers to So, *or Sabacon,* king of Egypt, *to assist him,* and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as [he had done] year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison.

5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years; *he first took and destroyed Moab, to prevent any disturbances on that side, as we find* Isaiah xv. xvi†. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king

* There was an interregnum of nine years; so long there was confusion after the death of Pekah.

† We have no particular account of the siege; but by many of the prophecies it appears that the people were treated very cruelly. The whole prophecy of Hosea relates to this; and also the beginning of Micah.

of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor [by] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes; *but many were still left in the land, who were afterwards carried away by his son.* 7 For [so] it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, *(his goodness in bringing them out of Egypt is mentioned, as an aggravation of their ingratitude),* 8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, *that is, the Canaanites,* whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made; *this relates to the calves and their worship.* 9 And the children of Israel did secretly [those] things that [were] not right against the LORD their God; *they had secret retirements for their idolatrous worship and wicked rites;* and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city, *from the shepherd's lodge, where country people secured their flocks and their grain. There were great multitudes of them, scarce a farm without an high place for idolatry.* 10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree; *wooden images, or the idols to which the grove was dedicated:* 11 And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as [did] the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: 12 For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing; *this was another aggravation of their crime, that it was contrary to the command of God, especially as given by a succession of prophets.* 13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, [and by] all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments [and] my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. 14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, *like a resty bullock that will not bear the yoke,* like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God; *did not believe what God said by the prophets, but hearkened to deceivers.* 15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, *stupid, idle, and insensible, like them,* and went after the heathen that [were] round about them, [concerning] whom the LORD had charged them, that they

should not do like them. 16 And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, [even] two calves, and made a grove, *in which lewd and abominable rites were practised,* and worshipped all the host of heaven, *that is, the stars,* and served Baal, *that is, worshipped the sun.* 17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger; *they were as incessant and industrious, as if they were hired and received wages to do such work.* 18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight, *from the holy land, which was especially under his eye and care:* there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. 19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. *It was an aggravation of the sins of Israel that they set an ill example to Judah, and infected them with their idolatry; therefore both at length were ruined.* 20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. 21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. *The foundation of their ruin was Jeroboam's iniquity.* 22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; *not one of their kings but followed the iniquity of Jeroboam;* 23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets, *whose threatenings they regarded not.* So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day, *and never returned any more. Thus the kingdom was destroyed, after it had subsisted distinct from Judah two hundred and fifty-four years.*

24 And the king of Assyria brought [men] from Babylon *, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed [them] in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. *These were inhabitants of some nations which he had conquered, whose fidelity he suspected, and therefore made this exchange, and put them into the cities where the ten tribes formerly dwelt.* 25 And [so] it was at the beginning of their dwelling

* It appears, by his bringing men from thence, that he was now king of Babylon also; but they quickly after revolted, and set up a king of their own.

there, [that] they feared not the LORD; *did not so much as pretend any respect for him as the Israelites did:* therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew [some] of them; *this showed that it was not for want of power that God delivered his people captive.* 26 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. *They thought Jehovah was a topical god, like the gods of their country, whose power extended only to their own land.* 27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. 28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. *Probably an idolatrous priest, by his settling at Beth-el, who taught them the idolatrous customs they practised there.* 29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put [them] in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. *They worshipped their own country gods as well as the gods of Israel.* 30 And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, *tabernacles of Venus, where young people prostituted themselves in honour of Venus, who has her name from hence;* and the men of Cuth made Nergal, *which signifies fire, another name for the sun, which was worshipped under different forms;* and the men of Hamath made Ashima, 31 And the Avites made Nibhaz, and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. *These are different names for Molech.* 32 So they feared the LORD, *acknowledged Jehovah to be a God, and performed some outward worship to him, lest they should be destroyed;* and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. 33 They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, *as the Israelites did, who worshipped God and Baal too,* after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence, *or, who carried them away from thence.* 34 Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named

Israel; *they continued the same practices, and were not reformed, as the Jews were at Babylon. The historian then takes notice again of their disobedience and ingratitude.* 35 With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them: 36 But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice. 37 And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods. 38 And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods; *this was the principal thing in the covenant.* 39 But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies. *This is repeated, to show that idolatry was a provoking sin; if they had served the true God, they might have escaped this calamity.* 40 Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. 41 So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day*.

REFLECTION.

SEE what wretched work sin makes in a nation. These people had all the advantages they could have desired from miracles and prophets; had full evidence that Jehovah was the supreme and only God; had great and wonderful deliverances, but all had no effect. Though there was something peculiar in their circumstances, as God was their temporal king, yet it is an awful lesson to all, that *righteousness exalteth a nation,* secures the favour and the friendship of God, and national prosperity; *but sin is a reproach and the ruin of a people.* May we of this nation take warning in time. *All these things happened to them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come.*

* This medley of religion lasted about three hundred years, till the temple was built on mount Gerizim, and the people were brought to worship the true God. They were afterwards called Samaritans. Here their history concludes, there being no account afterwards of what became of them. Some say, they were lost among the nations. Many of them no doubt settled together, and may subsist to this day, probably among the Tartars. There are many similar customs among some of the East Indians. Wherever they went, they would carry some general knowledge of the true God; and as James directed his epistle to the twelve tribes, some think it very probable they will be restored at last.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In Hosea xi. 12., the Lord says, Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah yet ruleth with God and is faithful with the saints.—In the last chapter we beheld Israel in desolation, which was indeed a melancholy scene, here we have a more pleasant one opening upon us; we see Judah in great prosperity, under a zealous and pious king.

1 NOW it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, [that] Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. 2 Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also [was] Abi, the daughter of Zachariah *. 3 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did; *he was a genuine son of David, a second David in his day.*

4 He removed the high places, *which none even of the good kings of Judah had zeal and resolution enough to do,* and brake the images, and cut down the groves, *which their fathers had multiplied,* and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made, *which was preserved to keep up the memory of that fact:* for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it, *as to a god, or to Jehovah through this medium;* and he called it Nehushtan, *a mere piece of brass, which had no divinity in it, no power or skill to help them.* 5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, *and not in any foreign force;* so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor [any] that were before him, *since the kingdoms were divided.* 6 For he clave to the LORD, [and] departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses; *he persevered in it, and was not like some others who began well, but fell off at last.* 7 And the LORD was with him; [and] he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not; *he cast off his subjection to him, which the king of Assyria called rebellion, and* 8 He smote the

* This was probably that Zachariah who had so great influence in Uzziah's time to keep him steady. His pious mother contributed much to keep Hezekiah pure in the midst of a very corrupt court.

Philistines, *who in the time of Ahaz had seized on the frontiers of Israel,* [even] unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city*.

9 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which [was] the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, [that] Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. 10 And at the end of three years they took it: [even] in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that [is] the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. 11 And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor [by] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: 12 Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, [and] all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear [them] or do [them.]

13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. 14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria, to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear†. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold; *above two hundred and fifty thousand pounds.* 15 And Hezekiah *had not corn sufficient, and therefore* gave [him] all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house; *he thought it was better to take these things than suffer the city and temple to be plundered.* 16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off [the gold from] the doors of the temple of the LORD, and [from] the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

17 And the king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rabsaris and Rab-shakeh, *three chief captains,* from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem, *to frighten them and engage them to surrender.* And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which [is] in the highway of the fuller's field. 18 And when they had called to the king, *that is, demanded audience of him, Hezekiah, not thinking it safe to go*

* In Chronicles, chap. xxix. throughout, is a more full account of Hezekiah, which may be read here.

† Sennacherib had taken some of the fenced cities of Judah, which success probably made Hezekiah suspect he had done wrong in withholding the tribute, see v. 7.

himself, sent three chief officers to hear what they had to say; and there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which [was] over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, *probably that Asaph who wrote so many excellent psalms.* 19 And Rab-shakeh, *who was the chief speaker**, said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence [is] this wherein thou trustest? 20 Thou sayest, (but [they are but] vain words,) [I have] counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? *This showed the highest pride, insolence, and falsehood, considering the presents Hezekiah had sent him.* 21 Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, [even] upon Egypt†, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so [is] Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him, *like one of the reeds on the banks of the Nile; which would not only disappoint him by breaking under him, but the splinters would run into his hand and wound him.* 22 But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: [is] not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem? *As to the profession of religion and trust in God, on which he knew they chiefly relied, he tells them that Hezekiah had little reason to trust in that, considering how he had destroyed his altars, high places, and groves; thus representing the best act of Hezekiah's life as a vice and wickedness.* 23 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them; *if he would stake the price of two thousand horses, he would furnish them if Hezekiah could find riders for them. Thus representing him as destitute of men and arms.* 24 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? *He here intimates, that if with these horses he was able to defeat one of the Assyrian captains, he would leave him to himself and retire to his own country. If not, how much less could*

* He was the king's cupbearer, as his name signifies; and by his talking of Jehovah, and speaking so readily in the Jews' language, he seems to have been an apostate Jew. He made a boasting speech, the main purpose of which was to tell them that resistance would be vain, if they trusted to warlike preparations.

† Probably Hezekiah had made some proposals to the king of Egypt, but was reproved and over-ruled by Isaiah. See the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters of Isaiah.

he stand against all the Assyrian army, though he had all the cavalry of Egypt by him; nay he adds, 25 Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it; *he urges that he had a commission from Jehovah himself to destroy it. This he thought would terrify them more than any thing else, and it seems to have had that effect.* 26 Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand [it]: and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that [are] on the wall. *The Hebrew plenipotentiaries perceiving the people frightened by these blustering words, desire him to speak in the Assyrian or Chaldee language which they understood.* 27 But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? [hath he] not [sent me] to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you? *He answers in a very scornful manner, that he was not come to treat with them, but to let the people know to what extremity he would reduce them by a siege, if they did not surrender.*

28 Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria; *instead of addressing the plenipotentiaries, he raises his voice and addresses the people on the wall, meanly endeavouring to stir them up to mutiny and division:* 29 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand: 30 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. *He repeats again the power of his king, and the weakness of Hezekiah.* 31 Hearken not unto Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make [an agreement] with me by a present, and come out to me, and [then] eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern; *he calls them to surrender upon advantageous conditions, and taste the sweets of peace and plenty:* 32 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil-olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die; and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us: *he would remove them to a better country than their own; but because he thought the chief thing to encourage them to*

hold out, would be confidence in God, he urges the vanity of such expectations, and all arguments to persuade them from that. 33 Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 34 Where [are] the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where [are] the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? *He urges the inability of the gods of those nations which his master had conquered, to deliver them.* 35 Who [are] they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand? that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand: *He challenges them to show one instance of a god being able to deliver his country when the king his master invaded it. A good argument indeed, if Jehovah had been like them.* 36 But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. *This was a wise and pious silence; they would gain no advantage by their answers, and only provoke him to utter further blasphemies.* 37 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which [was] over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with [their] clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh. *They returned to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, like mourners, on account of Rab-shakeh's rage and blasphemy, and the terrors of the people* *.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE hence learn, when we are entering on new stations of life, that it is of great importance to begin well. Hezekiah did so. In the first year, and first month, though Judah was brought low, yet his first work was to restore God's worship. He knew this was the way to please him and secure his favour; and therefore immediately set about it. When young people set out in life, and are entering on new scenes of action, they should take God with them, and engage heartily in his service. Those who begin with God, begin at the right end, and are likely to succeed.

2. Great courage and resolution are necessary for those who would reform mankind. Notice is taken of Hezekiah's zeal and resolution, and his *trusting in the Lord.* They have need of great

* In Isaiah x. 28. we have an account of the terror the people were seized with. This history illustrates all the former part of Isaiah's prophecy. The burden of other nations refers to those which the king of Assyria had conquered.

courage when the times are degenerate, when religion is at a low ebb, and corruptions are general. But if they trust in the LORD, and cleave to him, they may expect success, and often meet with less difficulty than they expected, as in Hezekiah's case. That may be done suddenly, which we despaired of doing at all. This should engage us resolutely to appear and act for God, and put our trust in him alone.

3. All occasions for superstition and idolatry, and things that have been abused to that purpose, should be taken away, as Hezekiah did the brasen serpent. The reformers made great use of this instance; insisting that it was necessary to destroy images and crucifixes, which had been abused in the times of popery; and even to abolish those ceremonies, which, though not in themselves sinful, had yet been shamefully used to bad purposes. Many others with great justice have urged the same objection against retaining the sign of the cross in baptism, which had been abused by superstition; and kneeling at the Lord's supper, which had been an act of idolatry in adoring a piece of bread. It would have been better if these things had been quite removed or left indifferent.

4. It becomes the greatest and best of men to own the hand and justice of God in national afflictions. *Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this,* 2 Chron. xxix. 8, 9. They were not to lay the blame on the Israelites, the Assyrians, or the Philistines, but on their own sins. God was righteous in all that befell them. A sense of this will promote humility and zeal in reformation.

5. When there has been a deep degeneracy in the church, the renewal of a solemn covenant may be of great service. This was common in the Old Testament, in the time of Jehoiada, and of Hezekiah here; and Nehemiah afterwards. This affects the mind greatly, prevents it growing worse, or being discouraged by little difficulties; *when we have sworn, we shall be likely to perform it.*

6. In all our endeavours to sanctify ourselves, the word of God should be regarded as our rule. They sanctified themselves by the word or commandment of the Lord. His word is very pure, and shows us what things defile us, and what are our ornament and defence. To this let us adhere, if we desire to be holy

and unblameable in his sight. Let us trust to no external rites; for the blood of Christ, and the influences of the Spirit, can alone purify the heart, and cleanse us from all sin.

7. We have great reason to rejoice when a spirit of reformation and devotion are abroad; especially where we have been in any way instrumental to promote it. Hezekiah rejoiced to see his exhortation regarded, and this good work going on. Let us rejoice when magistrates and ministers do their part; when abounding iniquity is suppressed; and decayed piety and charity revived.

8. The hand and grace of God are to be owned in preparing the way for it. *And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people,* 2 Chron. xxix. 36. When men speed or are intent and resolute in a good work, it is the Lord's doing. When church work goes on vigorously, and reformation spreads, let him have the praise, *who worketh in men both to will and to do according to his own good pleasure.*

CHAPTER XIX.

We have here Hezekiah's message to Isaiah, and the answer; Sennacherib's blasphemous letter; Hezekiah's humble prayer; Isaiah's comfortable prophecy in his favour; and the wonderful accomplishment of it.

1 AND it came to pass when king Hezekiah heard [it,] *that is, the words of Rab-shakeh, in the last chapter,* that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD, *with great humiliation and sorrow.* 2 And he sent Eliakim, which [was] over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, *in the same habits of mourning with himself,* to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. 3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day [is] a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy; *God hath testified his displeasure against us, and suffered the enemy to blaspheme:* for the children are come to the birth, and [there is] not strength to bring forth; *their strength was quite gone in a critical moment, when they wanted it most.* 4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the LORD

thy God hath heard; *will so take notice of them as to punish them: the late desolation of the ten tribes had filled them with great terror:* wherefore lift up [thy] prayer for the remnant that are left; *for Judah that they might not be carried away captive, like Israel.* 5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah, *and delivered their message.*

6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7 Behold I will send a blast upon him, *some sudden destruction,* and he shall hear a rumour *of some other enemies,* and shall return to his own land *in a fright;* and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8 So Rab-shakeh returned *to give the king an account of what had been done, and left the other captains to block up the city;* and *he* found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish, *being unable to take it.* 9 And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah*, saying, 10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; [as] Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which [were] in Thelasar? 13 Where [is] the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

14 Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD,

* The learned are much divided about the event here referred to. The case seems to be as Prideaux has stated it. Sennacherib, upon receiving Hezekiah's presents, went down towards Egypt, and took Ashdod, (Isa. xx. 1.,) destroyed No-Amon in Egypt, of which we have an account in Nahum iii., and besieged Pelusium, another city. Tirhakah, *v.* 9., came to its relief; which forced him to raise the siege, but Sennacherib attacked him and beat him. In Isa. xviii. xix., we read of the judgments of God upon Egypt and the Ethiopians. Now when Sennacherib heard say (*v.* 9.) that Tirhakah was coming again, he was desirous to terrify Hezekiah to surrender, that he might the better deal with the king of Ethiopia afterwards. He therefore sends him a blasphemous letter, much the same with Rab-shakeh's speech before. He had heard that Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, and had some promise of deliverance. This he ridicules, representing Jehovah to be only a local deity; and trusting in his former conquests, he says, *Let not thy God in whom thou trustest,* &c., *v.* 10—13.

and spread it before the LORD; *he read it, and instead of writing a provoking answer, he (as it were) sent it to the King of kings; by earnest prayer acknowledging God's universal providence, and referring himself to the divine determination.* 15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest [between] the cherubims, thou art the God, [even] thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. 16 LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God; *behold, here it is; see, and read his blasphemy under his own hand; deliberate blasphemy against thee the living God, and not an hasty passionate word.* 17 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, 18 And have cast their gods into the fire; *in this they pretend to no more than they have done, they have prevailed over other gods:* for they [were] no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. 19 Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou [art] the LORD God, [even] thou only; *distinguish thyself from idols, and show that thou art the only living and true God.*

20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, *the messengers probably came while he was praying in the temple,* saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, [That] which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. 21 This [is] the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him, *he elegantly addresses himself to the king of Assyria;* the virgin the daughter of Zion, *that is, the upper part of the city, which was called Zion,* hath despised thee, [and] laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee; *the lower part, called Jerusalem, laughed and shook their head. This is a prophetical representation of what would as certainly be, as if it were already past.* 22 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted [thy] voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? [even] against the Holy [One] of Israel; *against his infinite excellency, who has a peculiar regard to Israel.* 23 By thy messengers thou has reproached the LORD, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, [and] the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders,

[and into] the forest of his Carmel*. 24 I have digged and drunk strange waters, *I can have food and water where the enemy thought I should have none; perhaps this was intended as a banter on Hezekiah's stopping up the fountains*; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places, *or, as some render it, I have dried up the rivers of Egypt, taken their fortresses as easily as if their rivers were dried up*, Isa. xix. 6. *Then follow the words of God in answer to all this empty boast.* 25 Hast thou not heard long ago [how] I have done it, [and] of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste fenced cities [into] ruinous heaps; *what is this to what I have done who have dried up the sea? nor couldst thou have done what thou hast but by my power and help: I delivered them to thee;* 26 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were [as] the grass of the field, and [as] the green herb, [as] the grass on the house tops, and [as corn] blasted before it be grown up; *thou hast only been an instrument in my hand, the rod of mine anger*, Isa. x. 5. 27 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me, *and all thy contrivances against my people.* 28 Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, *the voice of thy threatenings and thine armies*, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest, *as easily as a man turns and pulls out a fish that hangs on his hook, or a rider turns his horse's head with a bridle.* 29 And this [shall be] a sign unto thee, *not a sign of their ensuing deliverance, for that came immediately; but a sign of God's care of his people, and his favour towards them.* Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof. *When Sennacherib was gone, they were afraid of famine; his army having eaten up or trodden down the corn: but there was enough for this year and the next, which was the sabbatical year, and the third they should go on with their usual husbandry, and prosper.* 30 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; *the*

* This is an admirable description of a boasting king, puffed up with his successes. To what place cannot I force my way and make an entire conquest of the country, of the mountains, the cities, the woods, and the fields, and drive my triumphant chariot over them all!

inhabitants shall have a firm possession of the country, and increase and multiply in it. 31 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion; *those that are shut up in the siege shall go forth:* the zeal of the LORD [of hosts] shall do this; *zeal for his honour and his people.* 32 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, *whom you at present fear,* He shall not come into this city, *not make one attack upon it,* nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. 33 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. 34 For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake; *for the sake of my power and mercy, and relation to this people, and especially to David, whose piety I remember, and to whom I have promised a successor.*

35 And it came to pass that night *in which the promise was made,* that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand; *he destroyed all the army that was encamped about Jerusalem, probably by a pestilential wind under the direction of an angel: these were common in this country; and, as travellers inform us, sometimes destroy a whole caravan at once: it is called, in* ver. 7., *a blast:* and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they [were] all dead corpses *. 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh, *full of shame and confusion and distraction of thought; and in revenge he destroyed many of the Jews there.* 37 And *he became so hateful to his people and family, that* it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

REFLECTIONS.

1. PRAYER is the best refuge of good men in every time of difficulty and oppression. Hezekiah prayed himself, and sent to Isaiah to pray for him and for the people. Their enemies endeavour to frighten them from it, as Rab-shakeh did Hezekiah, saying, *Where is your God?* But here is the first and last resort

* Psalm lxxvi. was composed on this occasion.

of good men; when heavy afflictions come upon them, when the interest of religion is at the lowest ebb, when difficulties insurmountable come, then is the time for prayer. *In the mount of danger the Lord is seen.* It is a comfort that they can spread their cases before the Lord, and that he takes notice of them; that he will *hear their prayer and send an answer of peace.*

2. It always becomes us in prayer to regard the honour of God, and to fetch our pleas from thence. Adore him, with Hezekiah, *as the God of Israel;* as *the God of the kingdoms of the earth; the supreme, universal, everlasting King;* we should maintain a regard to his glory, *that the nations may know and serve him.* A principle of religion is improved by prayer. Especially that his *name may be glorified,* this should be our daily prayer, *hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come.*

3. God, who takes notice of the boasts of proud men, can easily humble them. When men, like Sennacherib, *exalt their voice,* and *lift up their haughty eyes on high,* he sees and observes it. All boastings are reflections upon God and his providence, to whom we owe every thing. It is wrong to talk proudly; 'but, (as Mr. Henry observes upon this story), it is worse to write proud and angry letters; for that shows deliberation and design; and these continue long, and do more mischief.' *Every one that is proud in heart,* however he may show it, *is an abomination to the Lord.*

4. It is a great satisfaction to the church and people of God, to think that he has the greatest and proudest of their enemies under his control. He has his eye upon them, knows their abode, their going out and coming in, their rage against his people. He knows all their plots and contrivances; he has his hand upon them; *his hook is in their nose, and his bridle in their mouth;* they are doing his work, and act by his power. He sees and knows all their insolence and rage; and, as the psalmist observes concerning this story, Psalm lxxvi. 10., *The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath shall he restrain.*

5. What a great, powerful, and terrible God is Jehovah! *At his rebuke,* the psalmist observes, *the chariots and horses are cast into a deep sleep; none of the men of might have found their hands.* The greatest numbers cannot stand before him; one of his mighty angels destroyed this numerous host. Where is *the great king, the king of Assyria,* now? *Thou,* says the psalmist, *even thou, art to be feared.* Not the greatest king, but thou alone; and *who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?* The general

lesson from the whole is, *O love the Lord, all ye his saints; for the Lord preserveth the faithful, but plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.* (See the seventy-sixth Psalm.)

CHAPTER XX.

Hezekiah's sickness, and his recovery upon earnest prayer; a melancholy instance of his vanity, for which he is reproved; and his prosperity and death.

1 IN those days, *while Sennacherib was encamped against Jerusalem, and in the fourteenth year of his reign,* was Hezekiah sick unto death, *sick of a mortal disease.* And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. 2 Then he turned his face to the wall *for privacy,* and prayed unto the LORD, saying, 3 I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done [that which is] good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore, *because the reformation was not completed, the city was in great danger, and he had no son to succeed him.* 4 And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5 Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, *that out of regard to them his life is spared,* Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD, *and return thanks for the cure.* 6 And I will add unto thy days fifteen years, *longer than on account of this disease he could expect to live;* and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. 7 And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid [it] on the boil and he recovered*. 8 And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What [shall be] the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third

* His disorder was probably a quinsy, or imposthume in his throat. The figs might have a natural tendency to ripen it; but could not succeed in so dangerous a case without a miraculous interposition.

day; *the message seemed contradictory to the former; he therefore asks a sign, probably remembering that his father was reproved for refusing one.* 9 And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? *He leaves him to choose.* 10 And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees; *which Hezekiah thought more supernatural and extraordinary.* 11 And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz*.

12 At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick†. 13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and [all] the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah showed them not. *This is ascribed, in* 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26., *to pride, and having his heart lifted up. He showed them these things to make them put a greater value on the alliance. He did not show them the temple, the book of the law, and their worship, nor introduce them to Isaiah, the greatest treasure in all his dominions: but chiefly the treasures which were the plunder of the Assyrians.*

14 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, *and in the name of God calls him to account for it,* and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, [even] from Babylon. *He mentions this to show the great honour they had done him.* 15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All [the things] that [are] in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. 16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah,

* There is no reason to suppose the whole course of the heavens retired back upon this occasion; only the beams of the sun were inflected, or bent back; which might be done in an instant, and kept so for some considerable time. We do not read of any sun-dial so ancient as this. The original is, *on the degrees or steps of Ahaz;* a flight of steps that led to the palace, near to which there was some pyramid or obelisk, which might cast such a shadow on the steps, as to measure the time. It seems to have been a sort of natural dial, which most people by observation make for themselves.

† The king of Babylon had been tributary to the Assyrians; but now becoming independent, he had a mind to form an alliance with Hezekiah; and therefore sends to compliment him on his recovery, and to form a league between them.

Hear the word of the LORD. 17 Behold, the days come, that all that [is] in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon*. 19 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good [is] the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, [Is it] not [good,] if peace and truth be in my days? *Hezekiah humbly acknowledges the justice of the threatening, and that there was much mercy mingled with it, in that the evil was deferred*†.

20 And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool and a conduit, and brought water into the city, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 21 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THIS chapter suggests many useful hints to sick people, and to those who are visited with other afflictions; to set their houses in order, to make their wills, and settle other affairs; but especially to set their souls in order. Let them learn to pray to God; this is the way to have the evil removed, or to be made fit for death. Let them learn also to use those means which Providence affords; otherwise they tempt God, and do not trust him. When recovered they should return public thanks; and love the house of God better. The most grievous circumstance in affliction is keeping us from it. We should own the goodness of God in moderating or deferring evil; and wish and pray for public peace and truth, whatever personal or relative afflictions we meet with. See Hezekiah's thanksgiving, Isaiah xxxviii., and learn to imitate it.

2. At sickness and death it is happy to be able to appeal to God, as Hezekiah did. The testimony of a good conscience en-

* This was a very mortifying message. But God was displeased that he should distrust his protection, and enter into an alliance with an heathen, of which the prophet Micah had warned him, (Micah iv. 9, 10.) Babylon was now a very inconsiderable nation, and the event seemed unlikely; but it afterwards happened, and Daniel and other youths of the royal blood were taken there.

† See a more particular account of this, and Hezekiah's prosperity and death, in 2 Chron. xxxii. 24., to the end.

courages our prayers and hopes, either that God will remove our complaints, or overrule them for our good, or that he will receive us to a better world. If we desire it, herein let us exercise ourselves daily.

3. We see that pride and vanity are sins which easily beset the best of men. God observes this and is displeased at it. We are always in danger of it. Who would have thought this should be the case in Hezekiah; that his heart would have been lifted up? Good men know too little of themselves. God is righteous and kind in sending afflictions to try us, that we may know what is in our hearts, and cure what is amiss there. Let us then pray, that God would *hide pride from us,* and keep us humble; and *that the fruit of every affliction may be to take away sin,* especially this sin.

4. How unbecoming, base, and ungrateful is it, not to render to the Lord according to benefits received! Hezekiah did not do so. It is a pity such a mark of infamy should rest on a name, in other respects so honourable. This is the character of us all in some degree; and we have reason to be humble for our ingratitude. Let all, especially those who have been recovered from sickness, or been delivered from other afflictions, inquire, *What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits?* When *he delivers our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling*; let it be our firm resolution, our diligent endeavour, and earnest prayer, that we may *walk before the Lord in truth, and with a perfect heart, and do that which is good in his sight.*

CHAPTER XXI.

In this chapter is a melancholy change from Hezekiah's reformation, in the wickedness and corruption of the people by Manasseh and Amon.

1 MANASSEH [was] twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Hephzibah. 2 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. *Being very young, the grandees of the kingdom were his guardians; and*

not being pleased with Hezekiah's reformation, they set themselves by their influence with Manasseh to undo it: 3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, *in the sanctuary itself,* of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD, *so that the pious Israelites could not attend the temple without defiling themselves with idolatry. He did all in his power to make the remembrance of the God of Israel to cease.* 6 And he made his son pass through the fire *to Molech,* and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards, *and thus studied to find out what God had forbidden in the law, that he might practise it:* he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke [him] to anger. 7 And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever; *he set up a filthy idol, which was worshipped with the most beastly ceremonies, even in the most holy place; and even the ark was taken out to make room for it, which Josiah afterwards restored to its place.* 8 Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them. *All this wickedness of the king and his people was aggravated by these declarations of God, and the warning he gave them; which, had they regarded it, would have been happy for them.* 9 But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel; *Manasseh was worse than any king of Judah before, and the people more grossly corrupted; accordingly, in several places, but especially in* Jer. xv. 4., *the sin of Manasseh is specified as the chief cause that brought the calamities upon them.*

10 And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, *Isaiah, Joel, Nahum, and Habakkuk, who all lived about this time,* saying, 11 Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, [and] hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which [were] before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: 12 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel,

Behold, I [am] bringing, *that is, I will surely and speedily bring,* [such] evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle, *it shall fill every one with terror and horror.* 13 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab; *Jerusalem shall have the same calamity which I brought upon Samaria, and the royal family of Judah as Ahab: the metaphor is taken from a mason, who measures with a line what is to be left standing, and what is to be destroyed:* and I will wipe Jerusalem as [a man] wipeth a dish, wiping [it,] and turning [it] upside down; *I will turn every thing upside down; empty Jerusalem of its inhabitants; and its filthiness shall be wiped away by its destruction.* 14 And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies. 15 Because they have done [that which was] evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day. 16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD *.

17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 18 And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

19 Amon [was] twenty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. 20 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh did. 21 And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them: 22 And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the LORD. 23 And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his

* It was an additional reason for his punishment, that he persecuted and destroyed those who would not comply with his idolatry; persons of the best character, and most zealous for God's service. He enforced his idolatrous statutes by penal laws, and put those to death who would not comply with them. Among others, it is supposed that at this time Isaiah was sawn asunder, and the chief men concurred in all this. An instance of horrible wickedness, which, it is afterwards said, *the Lord would not pardon*, ch. xxiv. 4. We have no further account of Manasseh in this book of Kings; but, in 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—20., we shall find an account of his repentance and reformation, and the reflections.

own house. 24 And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead. 25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 26 And he was buried in his sepulchre in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XXII.

Josiah, following the religion of David, does that which was right before God; he takes care to repair the temple; Hilkiah the high priest finds the book of the law, supposed to be that written by Moses himself; the king hearing it read, is greatly alarmed at the judgments denounced; he sends to Huldah to inquire of the Lord; and she prophesieth the destruction of Jerusalem.

1 JOSIAH [was] eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. 2 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

3 And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, [that] the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying, 4 Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people: 5 And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which [is] in the house of the LORD: to repair the breaches of the house, 6 Unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. 7 Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully.

8 And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. 9 And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again,

and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD. 10 And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. 11 And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. 12 And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, 13 Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great [is] the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us. 14 So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

15 And she said unto them; Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, 16 Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, [even] all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: 17 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. 18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, [As touching] the words which thou hast heard; 19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard [thee,] saith the LORD. 20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

CHAP. XXIII. 1—25.

Josiah having received such a comfortable message in the last chapter, set himself to do all he could to promote the reformation, arguing from the encouragement which he had received, that if the people humbled themselves with tenderness of heart, though judgments were determined against Judah, yet they would not come in that generation.

1 AND the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. 2 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, *Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and others,* and all the people, both small and great, *that it might be a national act:* and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD; *he read the law himself, to convince them of the miserable state of the nation, in consequence of so long a course of impiety.*

3 And the king stood by a pillar, *where his throne was,* and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all [their] heart and all [their] soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant; *cheerfully declared their consent to it, and their concurrence with the king, probably by standing up.*

4 And the king commanded, *a second time,* Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, *who were assistants to the high priest, or heads of courses,* and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven, *all the garments and instruments used in sacrifice and burning of incense:* and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el; *thus making that place, which was the source and fountain of idolatry, the dunghill for these shameful instruments.* 5 And he put down, *caused to cease, and probably slew,* the idolatrous priests *, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places,

* The Chemarim, Hosea x, 5. Zeph. i. 4., who were clothed in black, while the priests of the Lord were clothed in white.

in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. 6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, *or rather, an image called by that name, because among the heathen it was worshipped in groves; probably it was Astarte or Venus, with the representation of a grove about her in carving or painting,* without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped [it] small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people, *in detestation of such practices; and being thus rendered unclean, might prevent any of it being taken away as a relick.* 7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that [were] by the house of the LORD, *an impurity with which the worship of these idols was attended,* where the women wove hangings for the grove, *or tents which were put about the image, in which the worshippers used to commit all manner of lewdness.* 8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, *that they might not corrupt the people,* and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense *to the tutelar gods, to whom they committed the protection of the city,* from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that [were] in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which [were] on a man's left hand at the gate of the city; *to show his resolution, he did not spare those of Joshua the governor, but let the greatest see his impartial zeal against idolatry.* 9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren. *Amidst these acts of justice he showed mercy; for while the priests who had offered to Jehovah in the high places were deposed from their office, he still allowed them to share with their brethren in the provision that the law made for them.* 10 And he defiled Topheth, *the place where they sacrificed their children to Molech, or the sun; a place which, as Jeremiah says, was filled with the blood of the innocent;* which [is] in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. 11 And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, *to draw the chariot of the sun,* at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire; *chariots in which the image of the sun was drawn in solemn procession; a common*

practice to this day among the idolaters in the East Indies. 12 And the altars that [were] on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, *at the top of the house,* which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake [them] down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. *Manassch in his better days removed them, but Amon set them up again,* Zeph. i. 5. 13 And the high places that [were] before Jerusalem, which [were] on the right hand of the mount of corruption, *that is, the mount of Olives, here called the mount of corruption, because there they had corrupted themselves with idolatry; but all those high places* which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. 14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men, *to express his contempt of them, and that being thus defiled they might never be used any more.*

15 Moreover the altar that [was] at Beth-el, [and] the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, [and] stamped [it] small to powder, and burned the grove; *the calf was destroyed before, but now all that belonged to it was utterly consumed.* 16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that [were] there in the mount: *this seems an accidental thing, a thought that came suddenly into his head;* and *he* sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned [them] upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. *See* 1 Kings xiii. 1., *where this was foretold, above three hundred years before.* 17 Then, *seeing a large remarkable inscription,* he said, What title [is] that that I see? And the men of the city told him, [It is] the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el*. 18 And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria, 1 Kings xiii. 11.

19 And all the houses also of the high places that [were] in

* Perhaps some worshippers of the true God, in the firm belief of the truth of his prediction, had repaired the monument and renewed the inscription.

the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke [the LORD] to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el. *Probably this refers to some parts of Samaria which might be conquered by Judah during the late distractions of the kingdom of Babylon; or the governor might allow his coming on this errand.* 20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that [were] there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as [it is] written in the book of this covenant. 22 Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; *a passover celebrated with such solemn care, great preparation, numerous sacrifices,* (2 Chron. xxxv. 7—9.), *and universal joy of all good men;* 23 But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, [wherein] this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.

24 Moreover the [workers with] familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem did Josiah put away, *all the secret idolatry that he could discover, was entirely removed and destroyed;* that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. 25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there [any] like him; *this was a glorious character indeed*.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. WHEN times are ever so bad and discouraging, we should not give way to despair, but stir up ourselves the more in endeavours to promote reformation. In ver. 17. of the former chapter, we find that *wrath was gone out against Judah.* Nevertheless Josiah was willing to do what he could to lighten and protract the judgment, and he therefore set about reformation vigorously. *When iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes*

* It will be proper next to read the thirty-fifth chapter of 2 Chronicles, where the history of Josiah is continued.

cold. Good men are too ready to be discouraged, and think it vain to make any attempts to stem the tide and do good. But duties are ours, and events are God's. We know not what service God may make us instruments of; and whether we are successful or no, it will give us peaceable reflections; we know that *God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love.*

2. When entering into covenant with God, we here see how it is to be done, ver. 3., with resolutions to walk after the Lord, in the way he has marked out; to be followers of him, and obey all his commands, moral and ceremonial, and to walk agreeably to the law. It is to be done with all our heart and soul; with care, sincerity, and vigorous resolutions. The best of men need, like Josiah, to bind themselves to this work, considering the many ill examples which surround them, and the treachery of the human heart. In this view sacramental solemnities should be considered and improved.

3. Let us lament these instances of the degeneracy of human nature, and the corruptions of God's professing people. They had adopted the idolatry of all their neighbours: like the Egyptians, they worshipped calves; like the Persians, the sun and fire; like the Babylonians, the hosts of heaven; like the Phœnicians and their neighbours, Astarte or Venus. Let us lament that the world should be so corrupt, so lost to reason, as to *worship the creature more than the Creator.* No wonder *God gave them up to vile affections,* to all manner of folly, lewdness, and lasciviousness. But that Israel should be so corrupted and abandoned, and commit all these irregularities, was most infamous; especially that the image of Venus should be put up in the most holy place, and sodomites and prostitutes be admitted there. That the house of God should be turned into a brothel, in defiance of his holiness and justice, was shocking indeed. No wonder his wrath was kindled. How lamentable is it to reflect, that this is a description of the greatest part of the world, that such idolatries are yet practised in many nations. How should we wish and pray for the propagation of the glorious gospel through the whole earth, that the nations may turn from these vanities to the living God. How thankful should we be for the light of the gospel, and how careful to *show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light,* and to *walk as children of the light, and of the day.*

CHAP. XXIII. 26, to the end, and CHAP. XXIV.

From the thirty-first verse of this, to the end of the twenty-fourth, chapter, we have a short account of the reign of four kings; but there was no good after Josiah's death.

26 NOTWITHSTANDING the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. 27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.

29 In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him. 30 And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

31 Jehoahaz *the youngest son of Josiah, called Shallum,* Jer. xxii. 11., [was] twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. 33 And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold *. 34 And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoia-

* Pharaoh had no design against Judah when he came up first; but Josiah having attacked him, he bent his forces against his family and kingdom. The people had chosen Jehoahaz king, because he was of an active, warlike spirit, Ezek. xix. 2., *like a young lion;* therefore Pharaoh deposed him, and made his brother king in his stead.

kim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there, *according to the prophecy of Jeremiah*, chap. xxii. 12. *It was the custom of conquerors to change the name of those kings which they set up, to show their absolute power over them.*

35 And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold *that he had in his treasures* to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh, *to make up the whole sum that was demanded:* he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give [it] unto Pharaoh-nechoh.

36 Jehoiakim [was] twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 37 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done; *he was very wicked, like his predecessors; some particulars of which are mentioned in Jeremiah*, chap. xxii. 13—19., *and* chap. xxvi. 20, 23, *&c.*

CHAP. XXIV. 1 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him*. 2 And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, *all of whom were tributary to him*, and sent them against Judah to destroy it†, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets, chap. xx. 17. xxi. 10., *&c.* xxii. 16., *and* Jer. xxv. 9. xxvi. 20. 3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD came [this] upon Judah, to remove [them] out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; 4 And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon ‡.

5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings

* Nebuchadnezzar, having smitten Pharaoh's army, came against the Jews, to make them tributary to him, as they had been to Pharaoh. We find in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6., that he bound Jehoiakim in chains, and carried him to Babylon; but upon his fair promises and engagements he suffered him to return, till he rebelled against him.

† Some date the beginning of the captivity here; now Daniel and his companions were carried to Babylon. Daniel i. 1, 2.

‡ Manasseh's son is particularly mentioned, but many people concurred with Manasseh in these executions: though, I think, the words may be understood of Jehoiakim, for he shed innocent blood, Jer. xxii. 17.

of Judah? 6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers*: and Jehoiachin† his son reigned in his stead.

7 And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

8 Jehoiachin [was] eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name [was] Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done; *he went on in his father's steps, though he had been witness to the calamities he had suffered.*

10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers, *and surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon;* and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. 13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces‡ all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said, chap. xx. 17. 14 And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, [even] ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. 15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, *who continued thirty-seven years in captivity,* and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, [those] carried he into captivity, from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 And all the men of might, [even] seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all [that were] strong [and] apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon; *all but the poor people of the land. Mordecai was taken at this time,* Esther ii. 6., Ezek. xl. i.; *and from hence we must date the commencement of the seventy years' captivity.*

* We have only a general account of his death; but it is probable that when the city was besieged he made a sally, was taken prisoner, and slain, and lay unburied, agreeably to the prophecy in Jeremiah xxviii. 18, 19.

† In 1 Chron. iii. 16. he is called Jeconiah, or in short, Coniah, in Jeremiah xxii. 24, 28.

‡ Or rather, he cut them off from their bases or stands; as they were afterwards used by the king of Babylon, Dan. x. 2, 3., and were restored by Cyrus.

17 And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah; *this was Josiah's third son.* 18 Zedekiah [was] twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 19 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done; *persecuted the prophets, &c., an account of which we have in Jeremiah's prophecy,* chap. xxxvii. 20 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon; *having taken an oath of fidelity,* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13., *he broke it, for which he was reproved by Ezekiel. See* Ezekiel, chap. xxvii. 18*.

REFLECTION.

THIS one reflection may naturally be made on what we have been reading; that sin brings misery on a nation; it is a reproach to it; and will finally be the ruin of it. *For the iniquity of a land many are the princes thereof.* There was a quick succession of them, but all came to an untimely end. *These things are written for our admonition,* that if we desire the public welfare, the honour and happiness of our king, and the continued tranquillity of the nation, we should ourselves, and should endeavour and pray that others may, *lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.*

* I would here particularly recommend the reading of the prophecy of Jeremiah, where many particulars are recorded relating to these reigns, especially the twenty-second, twenty-sixth, and twenty-seventh chapters, on which the account now given will throw great light.

CHAPTER XXV.

In 2 Chron. xxxvi. 11—17., we find that their great wickedness, aggravated by God's kindness and compassion, was the cause of their calamities and ruin; in this chapter we have the siege and taking of Jerusalem; the captivity of the people; and the destruction of the city and temple; an account of their new governor, his cruel murder, and the advancement of Jehoiachin.

1 AND it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth [day] of the month, [that] Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. 2 And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah* 3 And on the ninth [day] of the [fourth] month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land; *many from the country fled there for safety, the famine became so terrible*†. 4 And the city was broken up, *a breach made, at which the enemy entered,* and all the men of [war] fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which [is] by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees [were] against the city round about:) and [the king] went the way toward the plain; *Jeremiah would have persuaded the king to surrender, but he would not.* 5 And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. 6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; *a city between Jerusalem and Babylon, where he lay waiting the issue of the siege;* and they gave judgment upon him. 7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon ‡.

* As soon as Nebuchadnezzar heard of Zedekiah's treachery, he built forts to keep relief from coming to the city, and besieged it. Jeremiah tells us, that the king of Egypt came to help Zedekiah, but the Chaldees went against him, and he fled. Upon this, they returned to the siege, which lasted about two years. See Jer. xxxvii.

† It is described in Lam. iv. 1—10.

‡ A council was held, and Zedekiah brought to trial, in which he was found guilty of treachery and rebellion, upon which they slew his sons before him, and

8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh [day] of the month, which [is] the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem. 9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great [man's] house burnt he with fire *. 10 And all the army of the Chaldees, that [were with] the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about, *that it might make no further resistance.* 11 Now the rest of the people [that were] left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away. 12 But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land [to be] vine dressers and husbandmen; *he gave them farms and vineyards: probably he had a particular charge given him concerning Jeremiah, to preserve him safe.* See Jeremiah xl. 2—6.

13 And the pillars of brass that [were] in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that [was] in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon. 14 And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. 15 And the fire pans, and the bowls, [and] such things as [were] of gold, [in] gold, and of silver, [in] silver, the captain of the guard took away. 16 The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD; the brass of all these vessels was without weight. 17 The height of the one pillar [was] eighteen cubits, and the chapiter upon it [was] brass: and the height of the chapiter three cubits; and the wreathen-work, and pomegranates upon the chapiter round about, all of brass: and like unto these had the second pillar with wreathen work.

18 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, *the high priest's deputy, who was to act in case of his sickness or incapacity,* and the three keepers

then put out his eyes, that no other object might thrust out the ideas of that bloody scene. He was then bound in chains, and carried to Babylon, to drag out a miserable existence there. While Jeremiah foretold this at Jerusalem, Ezekiel foretold it at Babylon, Jer. xxxii. 5., Ezek. xii. 13. Jeremiah foretold his going to Babylon, and dying there. Ezekiel foretold that he should die at Babylon, though he should never see it; and so it came to pass, he was brought there, but never beheld it.

* The burning of the city and temple had often been foretold, by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; it was not burnt when the city was taken, but a month after the cruel resolution was taken to burn both the city and the temple.

of the door. 19 And out of the city he took an officer, that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land [that were] found in the city; *sixty gentlemen of fortune, who had concealed themselves in the city* *. 20 And Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. 21 And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land; *all Judah was carried captive, about one hundred and thirty years after the captivity of the ten tribes.*

22 And [as for] the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler; *probably upon the recommendation of Jeremiah, as he had been saved by his father, and had a great respect for his son.* 23 And when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, there came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Careah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men †. 24 And Gedaliah sware to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon; and it shall be well with you; *he assured them with a solemn oath, that they should be safe, if they would be faithful to the king of Babylon.* 25 But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah ‡. 26 And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees; *being afraid of the resentment of*

* Probably these men were the chief instruments in persecuting Jeremiah, and in persuading Zedekiah, contrary to the prophet's command, not to surrender.

† These men had fled at the beginning of the siege, and gone to the Moabites and Ammonites. Jer. xl. 7., but now returned, and put themselves under his command; and Jeremiah also put himself under his protection, though the Chaldean general would have had him gone with him to Babylon, and promised to use him kindly there. Jer. xl. 2, 6.

‡ Ishmael being of the seed royal, thought he had more right to the government; and being set on by the king of the Ammonites he treacherously murdered Gedaliah, at an entertainment he had prepared for him. Gedaliah had been warned of Ishmael's designs, but did not apprehend the danger. See Jer. xl. 13, &c.

the Chaldees, they went to Egypt, contrary to the command of the Lord. Here they behaved very wickedly, and were all destroyed; they took Jeremiah with them, and he probably died there. See Jeremiah xliii.

27 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth [day] of the month, [that] Evil-merodach king of Babylon, *and son of Nebuchadnezzar,* in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; *gave him dignity and promotion above other kings who were then captive at Babylon.* 28 And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that [were] with him in Babylon; 29 And changed his prison garments, *and gave him royal apparel:* and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life; *sat at his table, and had an allowance for the support of his family.* 30 And his allowance [was] a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life*.

* The Jews have a tradition that this prince was cast into prison with Jehoiachin, for his evil government during his father's seven years' distraction; and that this was the reason of his favour and affection to him afterwards. This would be an encouragement to the pious Jews in captivity; and they would look upon it as an omen of their approaching deliverance. The last chapter of Jeremiah is almost the same as this; and was designed to throw light upon his prophecy. The fortieth chapter of Jeremiah should be read in this connexion. The history and the prophecy illustrate and confirm one another. After this time the land lay desolate, and kept a sabbath of seventy years' rest, because they had profaned the sabbath, and neglected the observation of the sabbatical years, when the land should rest every seventh year.

THE

FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES.

INTRODUCTION.

This and the following book contain something concerning the state of the church from the beginning of the world, till after the Babylonish captivity, and therefore probably were written at that time by Ezra, compare 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23. with Ezra i. 1, 2, 3. The design of them is chiefly to give an exact account of the genealogies, especially of the church, from Adam downwards; that so it might certainly be known of what tribe and family Christ, the promised seed, was; which therefore Matthew, but Luke especially, make use of to this purpose. Here are also related several passages of the kings of Judah, omitted in the books of Samuel and the Kings, and some other passages are explained.

CHAPTER I.

The genealogies from Adam to Abraham, whose posterity is recounted; especially the kings and dukes of Edom.

1 ADAM, Sheth, Enosh, 2 Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered, 3 Henoch, Methuselah, Lamech, 4 Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

5 The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. 6 And the sons of Gomer; Ashchenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. 7 And the sons of Javan; Elisha, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

8 The sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, Put and Canaan. 9 And the sons of Cush; Sebah, and Havilah, and Sabta, and Raamah, and Sabtecha. And the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. 10 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth. 11 And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, 12 And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (of whom came the Philistines) and Caphthorim. 13 And Canaan begat Zidon his first born, and Heth, 14 The Jebusite also, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite, 15 And the Hivite, and

the Arkite, and the Sinite, 16 And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite.

17 The sons of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Meshech. 18 And Arphaxad begat Shelah, and Shelah begat Eber. 19 And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one [was] Peleg; because in his days the earth was divided: and his brother's name [was] Joktan. 20 And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah, 21 Hadoram also, and Uzal, and Diklah, 22 And Ebal, and Abimael, and Sheba, 23 And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab. All these [were] the sons of Joktan.

24 Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, 25 Eber, Peleg, Reu, 26 Serug, Nahor, Terah, 27 Abram, the same [is] Abraham. 28 The sons of Abraham; Isaac, and Ishmael.

29 These [are] their generations: the first born of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, and Abdeel, and Mibsam, 30 Mishma, and Dumah, Massa, Hadad, and Tema, 31 Jetur, Nephish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael.

32 Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bare Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan. 33 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Henoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these [are] the sons of Keturah.

34 And Abraham begat Isaac. The sons of Isaac; Esau and Israel. 35 The sons of Esau; Eliphaz, Reuel, and Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah. 36 The sons of Eliphaz; Teman, and Omar, Zephi, and Gatam, Kenaz, and Timna, and Amalek. 37 The sons of Reuel; Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

38 And the sons of Seir; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, and Dishon, and Ezar, and Dishan. 39 And the sons of Lotan; Hori, and Homam: and Timna [was] Lotan's sister. 40 The sons of Shobal; Alian, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. And the sons of Zibeon; Aiah, and Anah. 41 The sons of Anah; Dishon. And the sons of Dishon; Amram, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran. 42 The sons of Ezer; Bilhan, and Zavan, [and] Jakan. The sons of Dishan; Uz, and Aran.

43 Now these [are] the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before [any] king reigned over the children of Israel; Bela the son of Beor: and the name of his city [was] Dinhabah. 44 And when Bela was dead, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah

reigned in his stead. 45 And when Jobab was dead, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his stead. 46 And when Husham was dead, Hadad the son of Bedad, which smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city [was] Avith. 47 And when Hadad was dead, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. 48 And when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth by the river reigned in his stead. 49 And when Shaul was dead, Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. 50 And when Baal-hanan was dead, Hadad reigned in his stead: and the name of his city [was] Pai; and his wife's name [was] Mehetabel the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

51 Hadad died also. And the dukes of Edom were; duke Timna, duke Aliah, duke Jetheth, 52 Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon, 53 Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar, 54 Duke Magdiel, duke Iram. These [are] the dukes of Edom.

CHAPTER II.

The posterities of Israel, Judah, Jesse, Caleb, Hezron, and Jerahmeel.

1 THESE [are] the sons of Israel; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, 2 Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

3 The sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah: [which] three were born unto him of the daughter of Shuah the Canaanitess. And Er, the first born of Judah, was evil in the sight of the LORD; and he slew him. 4 And Tamar his daughter in law bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah [were] five. 5 The sons of Pharez; Hezron, and Hamul. 6 And the sons of Zerah; Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara: five of them in all. 7 And the sons of Carmi; Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed. 8 And the sons of Ethan; Azariah. 9 The sons also of Hezron, that were born unto him; Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai. 10 And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah; 11 And Nahshon begat Salma, and Salma begat Boaz, 12 And Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse,

13 And Jesse begat his first born Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third. 14 Nethaneel the fourth, Reddai the fifth. 15 Ozem the sixth, David the seventh. 16 Whose sisters [were] Zeruiah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three. 17 And Abigail bare Amasa: and the father of Amasa [was] Jether the Ishmeelite.

18 And Caleb the son of Hezron begat [children] of Azubah [his] wife, and of Jerioth: her sons [are] these; Jesher, and Shobab, and Ardon. 19 And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, which bare him Hur. 20 And Hur begat Uri, and Uri begat Bezaleel.

21 And afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir, the father of Gilead, whom he married when he [was] threescore years old, and she bare him Segub. 22 And Segub begat Jair, who had three and twenty cities in the land of Gilead. 23 And he took Geshur, and Aram, with the towns of Jair, from them, with Kenath and the towns thereof, [even] threescore cities: all these [belonged to] the sons of Machir, the father of Gilead. 24 And after that Hezron was dead in Caleb-ephratah, then Abiah Hezron's wife bare him Ashur the father of Tekoa.

25 And the sons of Jerahmeel the first born of Hezron were, Ram the first born, and Bunah, and Oren, and Ozem, [and] Ahijah. 26 Jarahmeel had also another wife, whose name [was] Atarah; she [was] the mother of Onam. 27 And the sons of Ram the first born of Jerahmeel were Maaz, and Jamin, and Eker. 28 And the sons of Onam were, Shammai, and Jada. And the sons of Shammai; Nadab, and Abishur. 29 And the name of the wife of Abishur, [was] Abihail, and she bare him Ahban, and Molid. 30 And the sons of Nadab; Seled, and Appaim: but Seled died without children. 31 And the sons of Appaim; Ishi. And the sons of Ishi; Sheshan. And the children of Sheshan; Ahlai. 32 And the sons of Jada the brother of Shammai; Jether, and Jonathan: and Jether died without children. 33 And the sons of Jonathan; Peleth and Zara. These were the sons of Jerahmeel.

34 Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. And Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name [was] Jarha. 35 And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife; and she bare him Attai. 36 And Attai begat Nathan, and Nathan begat Zabad, 37 And Zabad begat Ephlal, and Ephlal begat Obed, 38 And Obed begat Jehu, and Jehu begat Azariah, 39 And Azariah begat Helez, and Helez begat Eleasah, 40 And Eleasah

begat Sisamai, and Sisamai begat Shallum, 41 And Shallum begat Jekamiah, and Jekamiah begat Elishama.

42 Now the sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel [were] Mesha his first born, which [was] the father of Ziph; and the sons of Mareshah the father of Hebron. 43 And the sons of Hebron; Korah, and Tappuah, and Rekem, and Shema. 44 And Shema begat Raham, the father of Jorkoam: and Rekem begat Shammai. 45 And the son of Shammai [was] Maon; and Maon [was] the father of Beth-zur. 46 And Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bare Haran, and Moza, and Gazez; and Haran begat Gazez. 47 And the sons of Jahdai; Regem, and Jotham, and Gesham, and Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph. 48 Maachah, Caleb's concubine, bare Sheber, and Tirhanah. 49 She bare also Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of Machbena, and the father of Gibea: and the daughter of Caleb [was] Achsa.

50 These were the sons of Caleb the son of Hur, the first born of Ephratah; Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim, 51 Salma the father of Beth-lehem, Hareph the father of Beth-gader. 52 And Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim had sons; Haroeh, [and] half of the Manahethites. 53 And the families of Kirjath-jearim; the Ithrites, and the Puhites, and the Shumathites, and the Mishraites; of them came the Zareathites, and Eshtaulites. 54 The sons of Salma; Beth-lehem, and the Netophathites, Ataroth, the house of Joab, and half of the Manahethites, the Zorites. 55 And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, [and] Suchathites. These [are] the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.

CHAPTER III.

The sons of David; his line to Zedekiah; and the posterity of Jeconiah.

1 NOW these were the sons of David which were born unto him in Hebron; the first born, Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess: the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess: 2 The third, Absalom the son of Maachah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur: the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith: 3 The fifth, Shephatiah of Abital: the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife.

4 [These] six were born unto him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. 5 And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel: 6 Ibhar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet, 7 And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 8 And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. 9 [These were] all the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister.

10 And Solomon's son [was] Rehoboam, Abia his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, 11 Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, 12 Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, 13 Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, 14 Amon his son, Josiah his son. 15 And the sons of Josiah [were,] the first born Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. 16 And the sons of Jehoiakim; Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son.

17 And the sons of Jeconiah; Assir, Salathiel his son, 18 Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. 19 And the sons of Pedaiah [were,] Zerubbabel, and Shimei; and the sons of Zerubbabel; Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister: 20 And Hashubah, and Ohel, and Berechiah, and Hasadiah, Jushab-hesed, five. 21 And the sons of Hananiah; Pelatiah, and Jesaiah; the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shechaniah. 22 And the sons of Shechaniah; Shemaiah: and the sons of Shemaiah; Hattush, and Igeal, and Bariah, and Neariah, and Shaphat, six. 23 And the sons of Neariah; Elioenai, and Hezekiah, and Azrikam, three. 24 And the sons of Elioenai [were,] Hodaiah, and Eliashib, and Pelaiah, and Akkub, and Johanan, and Dalaiah, and Anani, seven.

CHAPTER IV.

The posterity of Judah by Caleb the son of Hur; of Ashur, the posthumous son of Hezron; of Jabez; of Shelah; and of Simeon; the conquest of Gedor, &c.

1 THE sons of Judah; Pharez, Hezron, and Carmi, and Hur, and Shobal. 2 And Reaiah the son of Shobal begat Jahath; and Jahath begat Ahumai, and Lahad. These [are] the families of the Zoratbites. 3 And these [were] of the father of Etam; Jezreel, and Ishma, and Idbash: and the name of their sister [was] Hazelelponi: 4 And Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These [are] the sons of Hur, the first born of Ephratah, the father of Beth-lehem.

5 And Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah, and Naarah. 6 And Naarah bare him Ahuzam, and Hepher, and Temeni, and Haahashtari. These [were] the sons of Naarah. 7 And the sons of Helah [were,] Zereth, and Jezoar, and Ethnan. 8 And Coz begat Anub, and Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum.

9 And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. 10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep [me] from evil that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

11 And Chelub the brother of Shuah begat Mehir, which [was] the father of Eshton. 12 And Eshton begat Beth-rapha, and Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Irnahash. These [are] the men of Rechah. 13 And the sons of Kenaz; Othniel, and Seraiah: and the sons of Othniel; Hathath. 14 And Meonothai begat Ophrah; and Seraiah begat Joab, the father of the valley of Charashim; for they were craftsmen. 15 And the sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh; Iru, Elah, and Naam: and the sons of Elah, even Kenaz. 16 And the sons of Jehaleleel; Ziph, and Ziphah, Tiria, and Asareel. 17 And the sons of Ezra [were,] Jether, and Mered, and Epher, and Jalon: and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. 18 And his

wife Jehudijah bare Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these [are] the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took. 19 And the sons of [his] wife Hodiah the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite. 20 And the sons of Shimon [were] Amnon, and Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tidon. And the sons of Ishi [were] Zoheth, and Ben-zoheth.

21 The sons of Shelah the son of Judah [were,] Er the father of Lecah, and Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea. 22 And Jokim, and the men of Chozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who had the dominion in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. And [these are] ancient things. 23 These [were] the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.

24 The sons of Simeon [were,] Nemuel, and Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, [and] Shaul: 25 Shallum his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. 26 And the sons of Mishma; Hamuel his son, Zacchur his son, Shimei his son. 27 And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brethren had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah. 28 And they dwelt at Beer-sheba, and Molada, and Hazarshual, 29 And at Bilhah, and at Ezem, and at Tolad, 30 And at Bethuel, and at Hormah, and at Ziklag, 31 And at Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susim, and at Beth-birei, and at Shaaraim. These [were] their cities unto the reign of David. 32 And their villages [were,] Etam, and Ain, Rimmon, and Tochen, and Ashan, five cities. 33 And all their villages that [were] round about the same cities unto Baal. These [were] their habitations, and their genealogy. 34 And Meshobab, and Jamlech, and Joshah the son of Amaziah, 35 And Joel, and Jehu the son of Josibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel, 36 And Elioenai, and Jaakobah, and Jeshohaiah, and Asaiah, and Adiel, and Jesimiel, and Benaiah, 37 And Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah; 38 These mentioned by [their] names [were] princes in their families: and the house of their fathers increased greatly.

39 And they went to the entrance of Gedor, [even] unto the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. 40 And they found fat pasture and good, and the land [was] wide, and quiet, and peaceable; for [they] of Ham had dwelt there of old.

41 And these written by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found there, and destroyed them utterly unto this day, and dwelt in their rooms: because [there was] pasture there for their flocks. 42 And [some] of them, [even] of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men, went to mount Seir, having for their captains Pelatiah, and Neariah, and Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. 43 And they smote the rest of the Amalekites that were escaped, and dwelt there unto this day.

CHAPTER V.

The line of Reuben; their habitation, and conquest of the Hagarites.

1 NOW the sons of Reuben the first born of Israel, (for he [was] the first born; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. 2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him [came] the chief ruler; but the birthright [was] Joseph's:) 3 The sons, [I say,] of Reuben the first born of Israel [were,] Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 4 The sons of Joel; Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, 5 Micah his son, Reaia his son, Baal his son, 6 Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria carried away [captive:] he [was] prince of the Reubenites. 7 And his brethren by their families, when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned, [were] the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, 8 And Bela, the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who dwelt in Aroer, even unto Nebo and Baal-meon: 9 And eastward he inhabited unto the entering in of the wilderness from the river Euphrates: because their cattle were multiplied in the land of Gilead. 10 And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand: and they dwelt in their tents throughout all the east [land] of Gilead.

11 And the children of Gad dwelt over against them, in the land of Bashan unto Salcah: 12 Joel the chief, and Shapham the next, and Jaanai, and Shaphat in Bashan. 13 And their brethren of the house of their fathers [were,] Michael, and Meshullam, and Sheba, and Jorai, and Jachan, and Zia, and Heber, seven.

14 These [are] the children of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz; 15 Ahi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, chief of the house of their fathers. 16 And they dwelt in Gilead in Bashan, and in her towns, and in all the suburbs of Sharon, upon their borders. 17 All these were reckoned by genealogies in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel.

18 The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, [were] four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war. 19 And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab. 20 And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that [were] with them; for they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their trust in him. 21 And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand. 22 For there fell down many slain, because the war [was] of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity. 23 And the children of the half tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baal-hermon and Senir, and unto mount Hermon. 24 And these [were] the heads of their fathers, even Epher, and Ishi, and Eliel, and Azriel, and Jeremiah, and Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty men of valour, famous men, [and] heads of the house of their fathers. 25 And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. 26 And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

CHAPTER VI.

The sons of Levi; the line of the priests; the office of Aaron, and his line.

1 THE sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 2 And the sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 3 And the children of Amram; Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam. The sons also of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 4 Eleazar begat Phinehas, Phinehas begat Abishua, 5 And Abishua begat Bukki, and Bukki begat Uzzi, 6 And Uzzi begat Zerahiah, and Zerahiah begat Meraioth. 7 Meraioth begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub, 8 And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Ahimaaz, 9 And Ahimaaz begat Azariah, and Azariah begat Johanan, 10 And Johanan begat Azariah, (he [it is] that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem:) 11 And Azariah begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub, 12 And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Shallum, 13 And Shallum begat Hilkiah, and Hilkiah begat Azariah, 14 And Azariah begat Seraiah, and Seraiah begat Jehozadak, 15 And Jehozadak went [into captivity,] when the LORD carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. 16 The sons of Levi; Gershom, Kohath, and Merari. 17 And these [be] the names of the sons of Gershom; Libni, and Shimei. 18 And the sons of Kohath [were,] Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 19 The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi. And these [are] the families of the Levites according to their fathers. 20 Of Gershom; Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, 21 Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeaterai his son. 22 The sons of Kohath; Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, 23 Elkanah his son, and Ebiasaph his son, and Assir his son. 24 Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziah his son, and Shaul his son. 25 And the sons of Elkanah; Amasai, and Ahimoth. 26 [As for] Elkanah: the sons of Elkanah; Zophai his son, and Nahath his son, 27 Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. 28 And the sons of Samuel; the first born Vashni, and Abiah. 29 The sons of Merari, Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzza his son, 30 Shimei his son, Haggiah his son, Asaiah his son.

31 And these [are they] whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest. 32 And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and [then] they waited on their office according to their order. 33 And these [are] they that waited with their children. Of the sons of the Kohathites; Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel, 34 The son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah, 35 The son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai, 36 The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah, 37 The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, 38 The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel. 39 And his brother Asaph, who stood on his right hand, [even] Asaph the son of Berachiah, the son of Shimea, 40 The son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchiah, 41 The son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah, 42 The son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei, 43 The son of Jahath, the son of Gershom, the son of Levi. 44 And their brethren the sons of Merari [stood] on the left hand: Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch, 45 The son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiah, 46 The son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer, 47 The son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi. 48 Their brethren also the Levites [were] appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God.

49 But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt offering, and on the altar of incense, [and were appointed] for all the work of the [place] most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 50 And these [are] the sons of Aaron; Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, 51 Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, 52 Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, 53 Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

54 Now these [are] their dwelling places throughout their castles in their coasts, of the sons of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites: for their's was the lot. 55 And they gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, and the suburbs thereof round about it. 56 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 57 And to the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of Judah, [namely,] Hebron, [the

city] of refuge, and Libnah with her suburbs, and Jattir and Eshtemoa, with their suburbs, 58 And Hilen with her suburbs, Debir with her suburbs, 59 And Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs. 60 And out of the tribe of Benjamin; Geba with her suburbs, and Alemeth with her suburbs, and Anathoth with her suburbs. All their cities throughout their families [were] thirteen cities. 61 And unto the sons of Kohath, [which were] left of the family of that tribe, [were cities given] out of the half tribe, [namely, out of] the half [tribe] of Manasseh, by lot, ten cities. 62 And to the sons of Gershom throughout their families [were given] out of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. 63 Unto the sons of Merari [were given] by lot, throughout their families, out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. 64 And the children of Israel gave to the Levites [these] cities with their suburbs. 65 And they gave by lot out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, and out of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, these cities, which are called by [their] names. 66 And [the residue] of the families of the sons of Kohath had cities of their coasts out of the tribe of Ephraim. 67 And they gave unto them, [of] the cities of refuge, Shechem in mount Ephraim with her suburbs; [they gave] also Gezer with her suburbs, 68 And Jokmeam with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs, 69 And Aijalon with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs: 70 And out of the half tribe of Manasseh; Aner with her suburbs, and Bileam with her suburbs, for the family of the remnant of the sons of Kohath. 71 Unto the sons of Gershom [were given] out of the family of the half tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, and Ashtaroth with her suburbs. 72 And out of the tribe of Issachar; Kedesh with her suburbs, Daberath with her suburbs, 73 And Ramoth with her suburbs, and Anem with her suburbs: 74 And out of the tribe of Asher; Mashal with her suburbs, and Abdon with her suburbs, 75 And Hukok with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs: 76 And out of the tribe of Naphtali; Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, and Hammon with her suburbs, and Kirjathaim with her suburbs. 77 Unto the rest of the children of Merari [were given] out of the tribe of Zebulun, Rimmon with her suburbs, Tabor with her suburbs: 78 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho, on the east side of Jordan,

[were given them] out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer in the wilderness with her suburbs, and Jahzah with her suburbs, 79 Kedemoth also with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs: 80 And out of the tribe of Gad; Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, and Mahanaim with her suburbs, 81 And Heshbon with her suburbs, and Jazer with her suburbs.

CHAPTER VII.

The sons of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh, and Ephraim.

1 NOW the sons of Issachar [were,] Tola, and Puah, Jashub, and Shimron, four. 2 And the sons of Tola; Uzzi and Rephaiah and Jeriel, and Jahmai, and Jibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their father's house, [to wit] of Tola: [they were] valiant men of might in their generations; whose number [was] in the days of David two and twenty thousand and six hundred. 3 And the sons of Uzzi; Izrahiah: and the sons of Izrahiah; Michael, and Obadiah, and Joel, Ishiah, five: all of them chief men. 4 And with them, by their generations, after the house of their fathers, [were] bands of soldiers for war, six and thirty thousand [men:] for they had many wives and sons. 5 And their brethren among all the families of Issachar [were] valiant men of might, reckoned in all by their genealogies fourscore and seven thousand.

6 [The sons] of Benjamin; Bela, and Becher, and Jediael, three. 7 And the sons of Bela; Ezbon, and Uzzi, and Uzziel, and Jerimoth, and Iri, five; heads of the house of [their] fathers, mighty men of valour; and were reckoned by their genealogies twenty and two thousand and thirty and four. 8 And the sons of Becher; Zemira, and Joash, and Eliezer, and Elioenai, and Omri, and Jerimoth, and Abiah, and Anathoth, and Alameth. All these [are] the sons of Becher. 9 And the number of them, after their genealogy by their generations, heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour, [was] twenty thousand and two hundred. 10 The sons also of Jediael; Bilhan; and the sons of Bilhan; Jeush, and Benjamin, and Ehud, and Chenaanah, and Zethan, and Tharshish, and Ahishahar. 11 All these the sons of Jediael, by the heads of their fathers, mighty men of valour, [were] seventeen thousand and two hundred [soldiers,] fit to go out for

war [and] battle. 12 Shuppim also, and Huppim, the children of Ir, [and] Hushim, the sons of Aher.

13 The sons of Naphtali; Jahziel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shallum, the sons of Bilhah.

14 The sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom she bare: ([but] his concubine the Aramitess bare Machir the father of Gilead: 15 And Machir took to wife [the sister] of Huppim and Shuppim, whose sister's name [was] Maachah;) and the name of the second [was] Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters. 16 And Maacha the wife of Machir bare a son, and she called his name Peresh; and the name of his brother was Sheresh; and his sons [were] Ulam and Rakem. 17 And the sons of Ulam; Bedan. These [were] the sons of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh. 18 And his sister Hammoleketh bare Ishod, and Abiezer, and Mahalah. 19 And the sons of Shemidah were, Ahian, and Shechem, and Likhi, and Aniam.

20 And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son, 21 And Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath [that were] born in [that] land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. 22 And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him. 23 And when he went in to his wife, she conceived, and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house. 24 (And his daughter [was] Sherah, who built Beth-horon the nether, and the upper, and Uzzensherah.) 25 And Rephah [was] his son, also Resheph, and Telah his son, and Tahan his son, 26 Laadan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son, 27 Non his son, Jehoshua his son.

28 And their possessions and habitations [were], Beth-el and the towns thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer with the towns thereof; Shechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the towns thereof: 29 And by the borders of the children of Manasseh, Beth-shean and her towns, Taanach and her towns, Megiddo and her towns, Dor and her towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph the son of Israel.

30 The sons of Asher; Imnah, and Isuah, and Ishuai, and Beriah, and Serah their sister. 31 And the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel, who [is] the father of Birzavith. 32 And Heber begat Japhlet, and Shomer, and Hotham, and Shua their sister. 33 And the sons of Japhlet; Pasach, and Bimhal, and Ashvath. These [are] the children of Japhlet. 34 And the

sons of Shamer; Ahi, and Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram. 35 And the sons of his brother Helem; Zophah, and Imna, and Shelesh, and Amal. 36 The sons of Zophah; Suah, and Harnepher, and Shual, and Beri, and Imrah, 37 Bezer, and Hod, and Shamma, and Shilsha, and Ithran, and Beera. 38 And the sons of Jether; Jephunneh, and Pispah, and Ara. 39 And the sons of Ulla; Arah, and Haniel, and Rezia. 40 All these [were] the children of Asher, heads of [their] father's house, choice [and] mighty men of valour, chief of the princes. And the number throughout the genealogy of them that were apt to the war [and] to battle [was] twenty and six thousand men.

CHAPTER VIII.

The sons and chief men of Benjamin; and the stock of Saul and Jonathan.

1 NOW Benjamin begat Bela his first born, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third, 2 Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. 3 And the sons of Bela were, Addar, and Gera, and Abihud, 4 And Abishua, and Naaman, and Ahoah, 5 And Gera, and Shephuphan, and Huram. 6 And these [are] the sons of Ehud: these are the heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath: 7 And Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat Uzza, and Ahiud. 8 And Shaharaim begat [children] in the country of Moab, after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara [were] his wives. 9 And he begat of Hodesh his wife, Jobab, and Zibia, and Mesha, and Malcham, 10 And Jeuz, and Shachia, and Mirma. These [were] his sons, heads of the fathers. 11 And of Hushim he begat Abitub, and Elpaal. 12 The sons of Elpaal; Eber, and Misham, and Shamed, who built Ono, and Lod, with the towns thereof: 13 Beriah also, and Shema, who [were] heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who drove away the inhabitants of Gath: 14 And Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth, 15 And Zebadiah, and Arad, and Ader, 16 And Michael, and Ispah, and Joha, the sons of Beriah; 17 And Zebadiah, and Meshullam, and Hezeki, and Heber, 18 Ishmerai also, and Jezliah, and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal; 19 And Jakim, and Zichri, and Zabdi, 20 And Elie-

nai, and Zilthai, and Eliel, 21 And Adaiah, and Beraiah, and Shimrath, the sons of Shimhi; 22 And Ishpan, and Heber, and Eliel, 23 And Abdon, and Zichri, and Hanan, 24 And Hananiah, and Elam, and Antothijah, 25 And Iphedeiah, and Penuel, the sons of Shashak; 26 And Shamsherai, and Shehariah, and Athaliah, 27 And Jaresiah, and Eliah, and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham. 28 These [were] heads of the fathers, by their generations, chief [men.] These dwelt in Jerusalem. 29 And at Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon; whose wife's name [was] Maachah: 30 And his first born son Abdon, and Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nadab, 31 And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zacher. 32 And Mikloth begat Shimeah. And these also dwelt with their brethren in Jerusalem, over against them.

33 And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchi-shua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal. 34 And the son of Jonathan [was] Merib-baal; and Merib-baal begat Micah. 35 And the sons of Micah [were,] Pithon, and Melech, and Tarea, and Ahaz. 36 And Ahaz begat Jehoadah, and Jehoadah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza; 37 And Mosa begat Binea: Rapha [was] his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son: 38 And Azel had six sons, whose names [are] these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. All these [were] the sons of Azel. 39 And the sons of Eshek his brother [were,] Ulam his first born, Jehush the second, and Eliphelet the third. 40 And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons' sons, an hundred and fifty. All these [are] of the sons of Benjamin.

CHAPTER IX.

Concerning the original registers of the genealogies of Israel and Judah; the charge of certain Levites; and the stock of Saul and Jonathan.

1 So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they [were] written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, [who] were carried away to Babylon for their transgression. 2 Now the first inhabitants that [dwelt] in their possessions in their cities [were] the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims. 3 And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the

children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh; Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the children of Pharez the son of Judah. 5 And of the Shilonites; Asaiah the first born, and his sons. 6 And of the sons of Zerah; Juel, and their brethren, six hundred and ninety. 7 And of the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hasenuah, 8 And Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri, and Meshullam, the son of Shephathiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah; 9 And their brethren, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty and six. All these men [were] chief of the fathers in the house of their fathers.

10 And of the priests; Jedaiah, and Jehoiarib, and Jachin, 11 And Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God; 12 And Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maasiai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer; 13 And their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

14 And of the Levites; Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari; 15 And Bakbakkar, Heresh, and Galal, and Mattaniah the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph; 16 And Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, that dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites. 17 And the porters [were,] Shallum, and Akkub, and Talmon, and Ahiman, and their brethren: Shallum [was] the chief; 18 Who hitherto [waited] in the king's gate eastward: they [were] porters in the companies of the children of Levi. 19 And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, of the house of his father, the Korahites, [were] over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers, [being] over the host of the LORD, [were] keepers of the entry. 20 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them in time past, [and] the LORD [was] with him. 21 [And] Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah [was] porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22 All these [which were] chosen to be porters in the gates [were] two hundred and twelve. These were rec-

koned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. 23 So they and their children [had] the oversight of the gates of the house of the LORD, [namely,] the house of the tabernacle, by wards. 24 In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south. 25 And their brethren, [which were] in their villages, [were] to come after seven days from time to time with them. 26 For these Levites, the four chief porters, were in [their] set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. 27 And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge [was] upon them, and the opening thereof every morning [pertained] to them. 28 And [certain] of them had the charge of the ministering vessels, that they should bring them in and out by tale. 29 [Some] of them also [were] appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices. 30 And [some] of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices. 31 And Mattithiah, [one] of the Levites, who [was] the first born of Shallum the Korahite, had the set office over the things that were made in the pans. 32 And [other] of their brethren of the sons of the Kohathites, [were] over the shew bread, to prepare [it] every sabbath. 33 And these [are] the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites [who remaining] in the chambers [were] free: for they were employed in [that] work day and night. 34 These chief fathers of the Levites [were] chief throughout their generations: these dwelt at Jerusalem.

35 And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jehiel, whose wife's name [was] Maacha: 36 And his first born son Abdon, then Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Ner, and Nadab, 37 And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zechariah, and Mikloth. 38 And Mikloth begat Shimeam. And they also dwelt with their brethren at Jerusalem, over against their brethren. 39 And Ner begat Kish; and Kish begat Saul: and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal. 40 And the son of Jonathan [was] Merib-baal: and Merib-baal begat Micah. 41 And the sons of Micah [were,] Pithon, and Melech, and Tahrea, [and Ahaz,] *chap.* viii. 35. 42 And Ahaz begat Jarah; and Jarah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza; 43 And Moza begat Binea; and Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. 44 And Azel had six sons, whose names [are] these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan: these [were] the sons of Azel.

CHAPTER X.

An account of the overthrow and death of Saul; the triumph of the Philistines over him; and the kindness of the men of Jabesh-gilead to him and his sons.

1 NOW the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2 And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. 3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. 4 Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died. 6 So Saul died, and his three sons and all his house died together. 7 And when all the men of Israel that [were] in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities, and fled: and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9 And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people. 10 And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.

11 And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

13 So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, [even] against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking [counsel] of [one that had] a familiar spirit, to inquire [of it;] 14 And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

CHAPTER XI.

David by general consent is made king at Hebron; he wins the castle of Zion from the Jebusites by Joab's valour; a catalogue of David's mighty men, with their principal achievements.

1 THEN all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we [are] thy bone and thy flesh. 2 And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou [wast] he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel. 3 Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.

4 And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which [is] Jebus; where the Jebusites [were,] the inhabitants of the land. 5 And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which [is] the city of David. 6 And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. 7 And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David. 8 And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city. 9 So David waxed greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts [was] with him. 10 These also [are] the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, [and] with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

11 And this [is] the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jashobeam, an Hachmonite the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against three hundred slain [by him] at one time. 12 And after him [was] Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who [was one] of the three mighties. 13 He was with David at Pasdammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines. 14 And they

set themselves in the midst of [that] parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the LORD saved [them] by a great deliverance. 15 Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim. 16 And David [was] then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison [was] then at Beth-lehem. 17 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that [is] at the gate! 18 And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that [was] by the gate, and took [it] and brought [it] to David: but David would not drink [of] it, but poured it out to the LORD, 19 And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with [the jeopardy of] their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest. 20 And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew [them,] and had a name among the three. 21 Of the three he was more honourable than the two; for he was their captain: howbeit he attained not to the [first] three. 22 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lion like men of Moab: also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day. 23 And he slew an Egyptian, a man of [great] stature, five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand [was] a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear. 24 These [things] did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among the three mighties. 25 Behold, he was honourable among the thirty, but attained not to the [first] three: and David set him over his guard. 26 Also the valiant men of the armies [were] Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem, 27 Shamoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite, 28 Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, Abiezer the Antothite, 29 Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, 30 Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the Netophathite, 31 Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah, [that pertained] to the children of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite, 32 Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, 33 Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite, 34 The sons of Hasham the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shage the Harrarite, 35 Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal

the son of Ur, 36 Hepher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, 37 Hezro the Carmelite, Naari the son of Ezbai, 38 Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri, Zelek the Ammonite, 39 Nahari the Berothite, the armourbearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah, 40 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 41 Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai, 42 Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites, and thirty with him, 43 Hanan the son of Maachah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, 44 Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite, 45 Jediael the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite, 46 Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai, and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, 47 Eliel, and Obed, and Jasiel the Mesobaite.

CHAPTER XII.

A list of the companies that came to David at Ziklag; and the armies that came to him at Hebron.

1 NOW these [are] they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they [were] among the mighty men, helpers of the war. 2 [They were] armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in [hurling] stones and [shooting] arrows out of a bow, [even] of Saul's brethren of Benjamin. 3 The chief [was] Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth; and Berachah, and Jehu the Antothite, 4 And Ismaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty; and Jeremiah, and Jehaziel, and Johanan, and Josabad the Gederathite, 5 Eluzai, and Jerimoth, and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite, 6 Elkanah, and Jesiah, and Azareel, and Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korhites, 7 And Joelah, and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor. 8 And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, [and] men of war [fit] for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces [were like] the faces of lions, and [were] as swift as the roes upon the mountains; 9 Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, 10 Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, 11 Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, 12 Johanan the eighth,

Elzabad the ninth, 13 Jeremiah the tenth, Machbani the eleventh. 14 These [were] of the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least [was] over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand. 15 These [are] they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflown all his banks; and they put to flight all [them] of the valleys, [both] toward the east, and toward the west. 16 And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David. 17 And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if [ye be come] to betray me to mine enemies, seeing [there is] no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look [thereon,] and rebuke [it.] 18 Then the spirit came upon Amasai, [who was] chief of the captains, [and he said,] Thine [are we,] David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace [be] unto thee, and peace [be] to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band. 19 And there fell [some] of Manasseh to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle: but they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul to [the jeopardy of] our heads. 20 As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediael, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that [were] of Manasseh. 21 And they helped David against the band [of the rovers:] for they [were] all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host. 22 For at [that] time day by day, there came to David to help him, until [it was] a great host, like the host of God.

23 And these [are] the numbers of the bands [that were] ready armed to the war, [and] came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD. 24 The children of Judah that bare shield and spear [were] six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war. 25 Of the children of Simeon mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred. 26 Of the children of Levi four thousand and six hundred. 27 And Jehoiada [was] the leader of the Aaronites, and with him [were] three thousand and seven hundred; 28 And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains. 29 And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul. 30 And of the

children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers. 31 And of the half tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king. 32 And of the children of Issachar, [which were men] that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them [were] two hundred; and all their brethren [were] at their commandment. 33 Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: [they were] not of double heart. 34 And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand. 35 And of the Danites expert in war twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. 36 And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. 37 And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand. 38 All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel [were] of one heart to make David king. 39 And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them. 40 Moreover they that were nigh them, [even] unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, [and] meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for [there was] joy in Israel.

CHAPTER XIII.

David, with great solemnity, fetches the ark from Kirjath-jearim; Uzza being smitten for putting his hand to it, the ark is left at the house of Obed-edom.

1 AND David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, [and] with every leader. 2 And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If [it seem] good unto you, and [that it be] of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, [that are] left in all the land of Israel, and with them

[also] to the priests and Levites [which are] in their cities [and] suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us: 3 And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul. 4 And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. 5 So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim. 6 And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, [that is,] to Kirjath-jearim, which [belonged] to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth [between] the cherubims, whose name is called [on it.] 7 And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. 8 And David and all Israel played before God with all [their] might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

9 And when they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. 10 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. 11 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day. 12 And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God [home] to me? 13 So David brought not the ark [home] to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 14 And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.

CHAPTER XIV.

An account of Hiram's kindness to David; of David's felicity in people, wives, and children; and of his two victories.

1 NOW Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters, to build him an house.

2 And David perceived that the LORD had confirmed him

king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel.

3 And David took more wives at Jerusalem: and David begat more sons and daughters. 4 Now these [are] the names of [his] children which he had in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, 5 And Ibhar, and Elishua, and Elpalet, 6 And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 7 And Elishama, and Beeliada,and Eliphalet.

8 And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David. And David heard [of it,] and went out against them. 9 And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 10 And David inquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? and wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto him, Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand. 11 So they came up to Baal-perazim; and David smote them there. Then David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand like the breaking forth of waters: therefore they called the name of that place Baal-perazim. 12 And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire. 13 And the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley. 14 Therefore David inquired again of God; and God said unto him, Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. 15 And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, [that] then thou shalt go out to battle: for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines. 16 David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. 17 And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.

CHAPTER XV.

David having prepared a place for the ark, orders it to be brought from the house of Obed-edom; which is performed with great demonstrations of joy; he is despised by Michal for dancing before it.

1 AND [David] made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. 2 Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever. 3 And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it. 4 And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites: 5 Of the sons of Kohath; Uriel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twenty: 6 Of the sons of Merari; Asaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred and twenty: 7 Of the sons of Gershom; Joel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and thirty: 8 Of the sons of Elizaphan; Shemaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred: 9 Of the sons of Hebron; Eliel the chief, and his brethren fourscore: 10 Of the sons of Uzziel; Amminadab the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twelve. 11 And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, 12 And said unto them, Ye [are] the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, [both] ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto [the place that] I have prepared for it. 13 For because ye [did it] not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. 14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. 15 And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the LORD. 16 And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren [to be] the singers with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. 17 So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari

their brethren, Ethan the son of Cushaiah; 18 And with them their brethren of the second [degree,] Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Benniah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom,[9] and Jeiel, the porters. 19 So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, [were appointed] to sound with cymbals of brass; 20 And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah with psalteries on Alamoth; 21 And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel.

22 And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, [was] for song: he instructed about the song, because he [was] skilful. 23 And Berechiah and Elkanah [were] doorkeepers for the ark. 24 And Shebaniah and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obed-edom and Jehiah [were] doorkeepers for the ark. 25 So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. 26 And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. 27 And David [was] clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also [had] upon him an ephod of linen. 28 Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.

29 And it came to pass, [as] the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

David's festival sacrifice, and liberality to the people; he appointeth a band of singers and music to praise the Lord; and the psalm of thanksgiving.

1 SO they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God. 2 And when David had made an end of offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. 3 And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon [of wine.]

4 And he appointed [certain] of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel: 5 Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom: and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a sound with cymbals; 6 Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.

7 Then on that day David delivered first [this psalm] to thank the LORD, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. 8 Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. 9 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. 10 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 11 Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually. 12 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth: 13 O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen ones. 14 He [is] the LORD our God; his judgments [are] in all the earth. 15 Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word [which] he commanded to a thousand generations; 16 [Even of the covenant] which he made with Abraham and of his oath unto Isaac; 17 And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, [and] to Israel [for] an everlasting covenant, 18 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance;

19 When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it. 20 And [when] they went from nation to nation, and from [one] kingdom to another people; 21 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, 22 [Saying,] Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 23 Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; show forth from day to day his salvation. 24 Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. 25 For great [is] the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also [is] to be feared above all gods. 26 For all the gods of the people [are] idols: but the LORD made the heavens. 27 Glory and honour [are] in his presence, strength and gladness [are] in his place. 28 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 29 Give unto the LORD the glory [due] unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 30 Fear before him all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. 31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let [men] say among the nations, The LORD reigneth. 32 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that [is] therein. 33 Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth. 34 O give thanks unto the LORD; for [he is] good; for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 35 And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, [and] glory in thy praise. 36 Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.

37 So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required: 38 And Obed-edom, with their brethren, threescore and eight: Obed-edom also the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, [to be] porters: 39 And Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD, in the high place that [was] at Gibeon, 40 To offer burnt offerings unto the LORD, upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and [to do] according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel: 41 And with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name to give thanks to the LORD, because his mercy [endureth] for ever: 42 And with

them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals, for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God: and the sons of Jeduthun [were] porters. 43 And all the people departed, every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.

CHAPTER XVII.

David is here forbidden to build God a house; is promised blessings in his seed; his prayer and thanksgiving.

1 NOW it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD [remaineth] under curtains. 2 Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that [is] in thine heart; for God [is] with thee.

3 And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, 4 Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in: 5 For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from [one] tabernacle [to another.] 6 Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Why have ye not built me an house of cedars? 7 Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheep cote, [even] from following the sheep, that thou shouldst be ruler over my people Israel: 8 And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that [are] in the earth. 9 Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning, 10 And since the time that I commanded judges [to be] over my people Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that the LORD will build thee an house.

11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go [to be] with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy

seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. 13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took [it] from [him] that was before thee. 14 But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be established for evermore. 15 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

16 And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, Who [am] I, O LORD God, and what [is] mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 17 And [yet] this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast [also] spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD God. 18 What can David [speak] more to thee for the honour of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant. 19 O LORD, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all [these] great things. 20 O LORD, [there is] none like thee, neither [is there any] God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 21 And what one nation in the earth [is] like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem [to be] his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people; whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt? 22 For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, LORD, becamest their God. 23 Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as thou hast said. 24 Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts [is] the God of Israel, [even] a God to Israel: and [let] the house of David thy servant [be] established before thee. 25 For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him an house: therefore thy servant hath found [in his heart] to pray before thee. 26 And now, LORD, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: 27 Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O LORD, and [it shall be] blessed for ever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

David subdues the Philistines and the Moabites; and smites Hadarezer and the Syrians.

1 NOW after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines. 2 And he smote Moab; and the Moabites became David's servants, [and] brought gifts. 3 And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath, as he went to stablish his dominion by the river Euphrates. 4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also houghed all the chariot [horses,] but reserved of them an hundred chariots. 5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadarezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. 6 Then David put [garrisons] in Syria-damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, [and] brought gifts. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. 7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadarezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 Likewise from Tibhath, and from Chun, cities of Hadarezer, brought David very much brass, wherewith Solomon made the brasen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass.

9 Now when Tou king of Hamath heard how David had smitten all the host of Hadarezer king of Zobah; 10 He sent Hadoram his son to king David, to inquire of his welfare, and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadarezer, and smitten him; (for Hadarezer had war with Tou;) and [with him] all manner of vessels of gold and silver and brass. 11 Them also king David dedicated unto the LORD, with the silver and the gold that he brought from all [these] nations; from Edom, and from Moab, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines, and from Amalek.

12 Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruiah slew of the Edomites in the valley of salt eighteen thousand. 13 And he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David's servants. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

14 So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment

and justice among all his people. 15 And Joab the son of Zeruiah [was] over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, recorder. 16 And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Abimelech the son of Abiathar, [were] the priests; and Shavsha was scribe. 17 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [was] over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and the sons of David [were] chief about the king.

CHAPTER XIX.

David's messengers sent to comfort Hanun, are disgracefully treated; the Ammonites are overcome by Joab and Abishai.

1 NOW it came to pass after this, that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon died, and his son reigned in his stead. 2 And David said, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me. And David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father. So the servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon to Hanun, to comfort him. 3 But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? are not his servants come unto thee for to search, and to overthrow, and to spy out the land? 4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved them, and cut off their garments in the midst hard by their buttocks, and sent them away. 5 Then there went [certain,] and told David how the men were served. And he sent to meet them: for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and [then] return.

6 And when the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the children of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia, and out of Syria-maachah, and out of Zobah. 7 So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maachah and his people; who came and pitched before Medeba. And the children of Ammon gathered themselves together from their cities, and came to battle. 8 And when David heard [of it,] he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. 9 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array before the gate of the city: and the kings that were come [were]

by themselves in the field. 10 Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose out of all the choice of Israel, and put [them] in array against the Syrians. 11 And the rest of the people he delivered unto the hand of Abishai his brother, and they set [themselves] in array against the children of Ammon. 12 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee. 13 Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and for the cities of our God: and let the LORD do [that which is] good in his sight. 14 So Joab and the people that [were] with him drew nigh before the Syrians unto the battle; and they fled before him. 15 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.

16 And when the Syrians saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they sent messengers, and drew forth the Syrians that [were] beyond the river: and Shophach the captain of the host of Hadarezer [went] before them. 17 And it was told David; and he gathered all Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came upon them, and set [the battle] in array against them. So when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians they fought with him. 18 But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand [men which fought in] chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host. 19 And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants: neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more.

CHAPTER XX.

Rabbah is besieged by Joab, spoiled by David, and the people tortured; three giants slain by David's servants in three several battles with the Philistines.

1 AND it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out [to battle,] Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and

came and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried at Jerusalem. And Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it. 2 And David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and [there were] precious stones in it; and it was set upon David's head: and he brought also exceeding much spoil out of the city. 3 And he brought out the people that [were] in it, and cut [them] with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

4 And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines: at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Sippai, [that was] of the children of the giant: and they were subdued. 5 And there was war again with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff [was] like a weaver's beam. 6 And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of [great] stature, whose fingers and toes [were] four and twenty, six [on each hand,] and six [on each foot:] and he also was the son of the giant. 7 But when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea David's brother slew him. 8 These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

CHAPTER XXI.

David forceth Joab to number the people; he repenteth, and acknowledges his fault; and out of three plagues which God proposed to punish him by, he chooseth the pestilence.

1 AND Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan: and bring the number of them to me, that I may know [it.] 3 And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they [be]: but, my lord the king, [are] they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel? 4 Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came

to Jerusalem. 5 And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all [they of] Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah [was] four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. 6 But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab.

7 And God was displeased with this thing: therefore he smote Israel. 8 And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

9 And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, 10 Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three [things:] choose thee one of them, that I may do [it] unto thee. 11 So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee 12 Either three years famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh [thee;] or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. 13 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great [are] his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man.

14 So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. 15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

16 And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders [of Israel,] who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, [Is it] not I [that] commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but [as for] these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to

David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD. 20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. 21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor, and bowed himself to David with [his] face to the ground. 22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of [this] threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. 23 And Ornan said unto David, Take [it] to thee, and let my lord the king do [that which is] good in his eyes: lo, I give [thee] the oxen [also] for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all. 24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take [that] which [is] thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. 25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. 26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. 27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. 28 At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. 29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, [were] at that season in the high place at Gibeon. 30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

CHAPTER XXII.

The plague for numbering the people being stayed, and the altar built (see 2 Sam. ch. xxiv.), David prepares for building the temple; and gives a charge to Solomon about it.

1 THEN David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this [is] the altar of the burnt offering for Israel*. 2 And David commanded to gather together the strangers that [were] in the land of Israel; *the proselytes from other nations, especially Sidonians and Tyrians, who were better artists, the Israelites being principally farmers;* and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. *Though he was not permitted to build it himself, he might provide materials for it.* 3 And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings, *or hinges;* and brass in abundance without weight; 4 Also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David. 5 And David said, Solomon my son [is] young and tender, and the house [that is] to be builded for the LORD [must be] exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will [therefore] now make preparation for it†. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

6 Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel; *he did not leave it to his choice, but charged him to do it.* 7 And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: 8 But the word of the LORD came to me saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the

* God had declared by Moses, Deut. xii. 5., that a house should be built; and he had told David that his son should build it. This David thought was the proper place for it, because of the extraordinary token of the divine presence and acceptance which he found here, chap. xxi. 26. Or there may be an allusion to the words of Jacob, *this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*

† David here gives two reasons for this: Solomon was young, and could not make such preparations for the house as he could; and the building was to be very magnificent, for the glory of Israel, and its fame among neighbouring nations; and that the grandeur of the house might attract and influence the worshippers.

earth in my sight*. 9 Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, *that is, peaceable,* and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days; *no civil broils, nor foreign invasions and enemies; this will be a proper season for the work.* 10 He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I [will be] his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever. *Thus having related what God had said to him, he turns his speech directly to Solomon, and says,* 11 Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee; *he encourages him in the work, having no doubt but God would succeed him, because he commanded it.* 12 Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, *that is, direction and counsel how to rule the people, and conduct this great affair,* that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. 13 Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel; *he assures him of prosperity if he did so; and therefore exhorts him to put forth his utmost strength;* be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed; *let not the greatness of the work discourage thee; but depend upon divine assistance while thou art faithful in thy duty; and to encourage him to these, he tells him what preparations he had made.* 14 Now, behold, in my trouble, *though, on the whole, mine has been a turbulent reign, yet I have not forgot this great design,* I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver†; and of brass and

* The reason why he was forbid, we find in 2 Sam. vii. 2. The wars were warranted and succeeded by Jehovah; yet it did not suit with his majesty to have an house built by such an one. Human life was precious to God, and he was tender of the blood of his creatures. It was more proper for a peaceable prince to do it, who was a type of the Prince of Peace.

† This was a prodigious sum, near seven hundred and fifty millions; enough, say some, to have built all the walls with silver, and the roofs with gold. But it should be considered, that it was not all spent upon the temple; there were other buildings, and vast treasures laid up for maintaining above two hundred thousand workmen, for so many were employed for eleven years together, besides those employed in David's time. In early ages there was great plenty of gold; and David had many sources of wealth, from husbandry, trade, and tribute. Solomon had six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold yearly, and he had no subjects but what David had; he had many successful wars with rich nations, from whom he had ear-rings and jewels of gold, shields of gold, and gods of gold. It is not difficult to account how he had so much wealth, and how he laid it out, considering the buildings, the workmen, the treasures laid up, the gold about the temple, the utensils and the precious stones.

iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto; *there is room for all thou canst add in such a work as this.* 15 Moreover, [there are] workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work; *the workmen are already chosen, and their work assigned.* 16 Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, [there is] no number, *the weight of them is so great that it cannot be told.* Arise, [therefore] and be doing, and the LORD be with thee; *when thou art settled on the throne set about it immediately, and doubt not but God will be with thee.*

17 David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son *, [saying, 18 Is] not the LORD your God with you? and hath he [not] given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people: *we have had large experience of his goodness; and what he hath already done is a ground of hope in his further favour. All the enemies of Israel are subdued; we have peace round about; therefore, in gratitude for those favours, set to work, especially as it is for his service and honour.* 19 Now, set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God; arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD; *engage heartily in the work, and seek the divine blessing; then you will go on cheerfully and prosperously in it.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. AGED christians, like David, should consider the circumstances of young ones, and consult their benefit. They should not overburden them, but provide them what help they can, that they may go on easily and cheerfully in God's work. They should instruct them in it, ver. 11., in the nature and design of true religion; and encourage them to it, ver. 13., by their own experience, and the promise of a divine blessing; and pray for them, ver. 12., that God would give them *wisdom and understanding* to see and pursue their true interest: considering how

* This was probably a private exhortation for the great men to assist in preparing for the work, as there was a public address to them afterwards.

much the honour of God, and the support of religion, depend on the wisdom and piety of the rising generation, and that all the care of ministers and parents is little enough to promote it.

2. When God gives rest to a people, he expects they should devote themselves more closely and resolutely to his service. This argument David urged upon Solomon and his people. We should be solicitous to improve time while it is continued; while there is no foreign or domestic enemy; and while the gospel has a free course. Let us resolutely work the works of God; improve every opportunity to build up his house, support his worship, and advance religion. *Then had the churches rest, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

3. The promises of God, and the hope of his presence, should encourage us to work for him. *Arise, and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee.* Words that may well be addressed to every christian. Religion is the most important work; it requires vigour and resolution. God has promised assistance; and if the work be ever so hard, and the difficulties and enemies ever so many and formidable, *he will be with us*, and that is enough. Wherefore *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure.*

4. We should mind to add our prayers to all our endeavours in promoting the work and service of God. Ver. 19., *Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.* Prayer will quicken our own spirits; make us sensible of the importance of the work, that we may not dare to be insincere and trifling in it. It will also engage divine help, without which we shall flag and tire. If we are once deeply impressed with a sense of our dependance on God, and have our hearts filled with devout regards to him, we shall stick at nothing for his service and his sanctuary. If, by David's example, we stir up ourselves and all about us in this work, God will bless us, and reward all our labours of love in a better world, and through a happy eternity.

CHAPTER XXIII.

David in his old age makes Solomon king; the Levites ordered; the sons of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

1 SO when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel.

2 And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites: 3 Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. 4 Of which, twenty and four thousand [were] to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; and six thousand [were] officers and judges: 5 Moreover four thousand [were] porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, [said David,] to praise [therewith.] 6 And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi, [namely,] Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

7 Of the Gershonites [were,] Laadan, and Shimei. 8 The sons of Laadan; the chief [was] Jehiel, and Zetham, and Joel, three. 9 The sons of Shimei; Shelomith, and Haziel, and Haran, three. These [were] the chief of the fathers of Laadan. 10 And the sons of Shimei [were,] Jahath, Zina, and Jeush, and Beriah. These four [were] the sons of Shimei. 11 And Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second: but Jeush and Beriah had not many sons; therefore they were in one reckoning, according to [their] father's house.

12 The sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. 13 The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever. 14 Now [concerning] Moses the man of God, his sons were named of the tribe of Levi. 15 The sons of Moses [were,] Gershom, and Eliezer. 16 Of the sons of Gershom, Shebuel [was] the chief. 17 And the sons of Eliezer [were,] Rehabiah the chief. And Eliezer had none other sons; but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. 18 Of the sons of Izhar; Shelomith the chief. 19 Of

the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jehaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. 20 Of the sons of Uzziel; Micah the first, and Jesiah the second.

21 The sons of Merari, Mahli; and Mushi. The sons of Mahli; Eleazar, and Kish. 22 And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but daughters: and their brethren the sons of Kish took them. 23 The sons of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth, three.

24 These [were] the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; [even] the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward. 25 For David said, The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever; 26 And also unto the Levites; they shall no [more] carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof. 27 For by the last words of David the Levites [were] numbered from twenty years old and above: 28 Because their office [was] to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God; 29 Both for the shew bread, and for the fine flour for meat offering, and for the unleavened cakes, and for [that which is baked [in] the pan, and for that which is fried, and for all manner of measure and size; 30 And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even; 31 And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the LORD: 32 And that they should keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the holy [place,] and the charge of the sons of Aaron their brethren, in the service of the house of the LORD.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The divisions of the sons of Aaron into four and twenty orders; the remainder of the Kohathites and the Merarites divided by lot.

1 NOW [these are] the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 2 But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children; therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office. 3 And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. 4 And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar; and [thus] were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar [there were] sixteen chief men of the house of [their] fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers. 5 Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors [of the house] of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar. 6 And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, [one] of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and [before] the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and [one] taken for Ithamar. 7 Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, 8 The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, 9 The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, 10 The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, 11 The ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, 12 The eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, 13 The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, 14 The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, 15 The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphses, 16 The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezekel, 17 The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul, 18 The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah. 19 These [were] the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

20 And the rest of the sons of Levi [were these:] of the sons

of Amram; Shubael: of the sons of Shubael; Jehdeiah. 21 Concerning Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah; the first [was] Ishiah. 22 Of the Izharites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath. 23 And the sons [of Hebron;] Jeriah [the first,] Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. 24 [Of] the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir. 25 The brother of Michah [was] Isshiah: of the sons of Isshiah; Zechariah. 26 The sons of Merari [were,] Mahli and Mushi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno. 27 The sons of Merari by Jaaziah; Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri. 28 Of Mahli [came] Eleazar, who had no sons. 29 Concerning Kish: the son of Kish [was] Jerahmeel. 30 The sons also of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jerimoth. These [were] the sons of the Levites after the house of their fathers. 31 These likewise cast lots overagainst their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers overagainst their younger brethren.

CHAPTER XXV.

The number and offices of the singers; and their division by lot into four and twenty orders.

1 MOREOVER David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen, according to their service was: 2 Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king. 3 Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD. 4 Of Heman: the sons of Heman; Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, [and] Mahazioth: 5 All these [were] the sons of

Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. 6 All these [were] under the hands of their father for song [in] the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman. 7 So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, [even] all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight.

8 And they cast lots, ward against [ward,] as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar. 9 Now the first lot came forth for Asaph to Joseph: the second to Gedaliah, who with his brethren and sons [were] twelve: 10 The third to Zaccur, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 11 The fourth to Izri, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 12 The fifth to Nethaniah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 13 The sixth to Bukkiah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 14 The seventh to Jesharelah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 15 The eighth to Jeshaiah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 16 The ninth to Mattaniah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 17 The tenth to Shimei, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 18 The eleventh to Azareel, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 19 The twelfth to Hashabiah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 20 The thirteenth to Shubael, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 21 The fourteenth to Mattithiah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 22 The fifteenth to Jeremoth, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 23 The sixteenth to Hananiah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 24 The seventeenth to Joshbekasha, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 25 The eighteenth to Hanani, [he,] his sons, and brethren, [were] twelve: 26 The nineteenth to Mallothi, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 27 The twentieth to Eliathah, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 28 The one and twentieth to Hothir, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 29 The two and twentieth to Giddalti, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 30 The three and twentieth to Mahazioth, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve: 31 The four and twentieth to Romamti-ezer, [he,] his sons, and his brethren, [were] twelve.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The division of the porters; the gates assigned by lot; and the Levites that had the charge of the treasures.

1 CONCERNING the divisions of the porters: of the Korhites [was] Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph.
2 And the sons of Meshelemiah [were,] Zechariah the first born, Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth,
3 Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Elioenai the seventh.
4 Moreover the sons of Obed-edom [were,] Shemaiah the first born, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, and Sacar the fourth, and Nethaneel the fifth. 5 Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth: for God blessed him. 6 Also unto Shemaiah his son were sons born, that ruled throughout the house of their father: for they [were] mighty men of valour.
7 The sons of Shemaiah; Othni, and Rephael, and Obed, Elzabad, whose brethren were strong men, Elihu and Semachiah.
8 All these of the sons of Obed-edom: they and their sons and their brethren, able men for strength for the service, [were] threescore and two of Obed-edom. 9 And Meshelemiah had sons and brethren, strong men, eighteen. 10 Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons; Simri the chief, (for [though] he was not the first born, yet his father made him the chief;)
11 Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all the sons and brethren of Hosah [were] thirteen. 12 Among these [were] the divisions of the porters, [even] among the chief men, [having] wards one against another, to minister in the house of the LORD. 13 And they cast lots, as well the small as the great, according to the house of their fathers, for every gate.
14 And the lot eastward fell to Shelemiah. Then for Zechariah his son, a wise counsellor, they cast lots; and his lot came out northward. 15 To Obed-edom southward; and to his sons the house of Asuppim. 16 To Shuppim and Hosah [the lot came forth] westward, with the gate Shallecheth, by the causeway of the going up ward against ward. 17 Eastward [were] six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day, and toward Asuppim two [and] two. 18 At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, [and] two at Parbar. 19 These [are] the divisions of

the porters among the sons of Kore, and among the sons of Merari.

20 And of the Levites, Ahijah [was] over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things. 21 [As concerning] the sons of Laadan; the sons of the Gershonite Laadan, chief fathers [even] of Laadan the Gershonite, [were] Jehieli. 22 The sons of Jehieli; Zetham, and Joel his brother, [which were] over the treasures of the house of the LORD. 23 Of the Amramites, [and] the Izharites, the Hebronites, [and] the Uzzielites: 24 And Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, [was] ruler of the treasures. 25 And his brethren by Eliezer: Rehabiah his son, and Jeshaiah his son, and Joram his son, and Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son. 26 Which Shelomith and his brethren [were] over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which David the king, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host, had dedicated. 27 Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the LORD. 28 And all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah, had dedicated; [and] whosoever had dedicated [any thing, it was] under the hand of Shelomith, and of his brethren.

29 Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons [were] for the outward business over Israel, for officers and judges. 30 [And] of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brethren, men of valour, a thousand and seven hundred, [were] officers among them of Israel on this side Jordan westward in all business of the LORD, and in the service of the king. 31 Among the Hebronites [was] Jerijah the chief, [even] among the Hebronites, according to the generations of his fathers. In the fortieth year of the reign of David they were fought for, and there were found among them mighty men of valour at Jazer of Gilead. 32 And his brethren, men of valour, [were] two thousand and seven hundred chief fathers, whom king David made rulers over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God, and affairs of the king.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The twelve captains for every several month; and the princes of the twelve tribes.

1 NOW the children of Israel after their number, [to wit,] the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course [were] twenty and four thousand. 2 Over the first course for the first month [was] Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 3 Of the children of Perez [was] the chief of all the captains of the host for the first month. 4 And over the course of the second month [was] Dodai an Ahohite, and of his course [was] Mikloth also the ruler: in his course likewise [were] twenty and four thousand. 5 The third captain of the host for the third month [was] Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, a chief priest: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 6 This [is that] Benaiah, [who was] mighty [among] the thirty, and above the thirty: and in his course [was] Ammizabad his son. 7 The fourth [captain] for the fourth month [was] Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 8 The fifth captain for the fifth month [was] Shamhuth the Izrahite: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 9 The sixth [captain] for the sixth month [was] Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 10 The seventh [captain] for the seventh month [was] Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 11 The eighth [captain] for the eighth month [was] Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zarhites: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 12 The ninth [captain] for the ninth month [was] Abiezer the Anetothite, of the Benjamites: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 13 The tenth [captain] for the tenth month [was] Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarhites: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 14 The eleventh [captain] for the eleventh month [was] Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim: and

in his course [were] twenty and four thousand. 15 The twelfth [captain] for the twelfth month [was] Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand.

16 Furthermore over the tribes of Israel: the ruler of the Reubenites [was] Eliezer the son of Zichri: of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maachah: 17 Of the Levites, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel: of the Aaronites, Zadok: 18 Of Judah, Elihu, [one] of the brethren of David: Of Issachar, Omri the son of Michael: 19 Of Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah: of Naphtali, Jerimoth the son of Azriel: 20 Of the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah: of the half tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah: 21 Of the half [tribe] of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah: of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner: 22 Of Dan, Azareel the son of Jeroham. These [were] the princes of the tribes of Israel.

23 But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens. 24 Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David.

25 And over the king's treasures [was] Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the storehouses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, [was] Jehonathan the son of Uzziah: 26 And over them that did the work of the field for tillage of the ground [was] Ezri the son of Chelub: 27 And over the vineyards [was] Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase of the vineyards for the wine cellars [was] Zabdi the Shipmite: 28 And over the olive trees and the sycamore trees that [were] in the low plains [was] Baal-hanan the Gederite: and over the cellars of oil [was] Joash: 29 And over the herds that fed in Sharon [was] Shitrai the Sharonite: and over the herds [that were] in the valleys [was] Shaphat the son of Adlai: 30 Over the camels also [was] Obil the Ishmaelite: and over the asses [was] Jehdeiah the Meronothite: 31 And over the flocks [was] Jahziz the Hagerite: all these [were] the rulers of the substance which [was] king David's. 32 Also Jonathan David's uncle was a counsellor, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni [was] with the king's sons: 33 And Ahithophel [was] the king's counsellor: and Hushai the Archite [was] the king's companion: 34 And after Ahithophel [was] Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar: and the general of the king's army [was] Joab.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

David, in a grand assembly, declares God's choice of Solomon to build him an house; David's exhortation to the people and Solomon to be religious; the plan and materials of the temple delivered to Solomon, who is encouraged to set about it.

1 AND David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem*. 2 Then David the king, *who was sitting on the throne, and his son by him,* stood up upon his feet, *out of respect to this great and honourable assembly,* and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: [as for me,] I [had] in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, *that it might not be carried about as before,* and for the footstool of our God, *or, even the footstool of our God; the divine glory resting between the cherubims over the ark, was called the mercy seat, so that the ark was his footstool;* and had made ready for the building: 3 But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou [hast been] a man of war, and hast shed blood. 4 Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah [to be] the ruler; and of the house of Judah the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make [me] king over all Israel †: 5 And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the

* In 1 Kings, chap. i., we find David was ill; but whether the sickness then went off, or Adonijah's conspiracy roused his spirits, or his joy at Solomon's elevation gave him fresh vigour, we find by the course of the story that he was willing to have Solomon's advancement recognized and made public. He therefore called together the chief men of the kingdom, both from the court and camp, and every department.

† It was proper to specify this, to show that there was nothing of hereditary right in this case. Judah was not the eldest son; Jesse was not the most considerable family in it; David was the youngest son of this family; and Solomon one of his youngest.

LORD over Israel; *this was God's design, and not a partial fondness of his own, therefore they should submit to him.* 6 And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him [to be] my son, and I will be his father. 7 Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day; *hitherto he had done well, and he hoped he would persevere, and answer the expectations which he and the people had entertained of him.* 8 Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, *he addresses them as the representatives of all Israel,* and in the audience of our God, *who is witness to this solemn remonstrance, and all their engagements, he exhorts and charges them, saying,* Keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God, *study them and endeavour to understand them,* that ye may possess this good land, and leave [it] for an inheritance for your children after you for ever; *this is the only way in which you can expect God's favour. Then with a noble and affecting apostrophe he addresses Solomon.*

9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, *inquire after him, endeavour to know more of him, so as to love and trust him;* and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; *let your obedience be cheerful and universal;* for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; *this is one argument, the divine omniscience which extends to the hearts of the greatest men:* if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever; *this was another argument, the promise was conditional; as he behaved to God, so God would do to him. As great as David was, he minded the divine favour: and how powerful soever Solomon might be, if he forsook God he would be cast off and abhorred.* 10 Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong and do [it]; *though thou art young, be not discouraged at the greatness of the work.*

11 Then David gave to Solomon his son *the plan of the temple, containing* the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, *of the holy and most holy place and the several apartments,* 12 And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the

dedicated things; *not only those which David had dedicated, or added above what was sufficient to finish the temple, but the tabernacle of Moses and its utensils, which, having been so long sacred, were carefully laid up:* 13 Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD. 14 [He gave] of gold by weight for [things] of gold, for all instruments of all manner of service; [silver also] for all instruments of silver by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service: *he gave materials in due proportion to the things that were to be made of them:* 15 Even the weight for the candlesticks of gold, and for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof: and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, [both] for the candlestick, and [also] for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick; *there were ten large ones of gold to be fixed, and silver ones to be carried about.* 16 And by weight [he gave] gold for the tables of shew bread, for every table; and [likewise] silver for the tables of silver: 17 Also pure gold for the fleshhooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the golden basons [he gave gold] by weight for every bason; and [likewise silver] by weight for every bason of silver, *such a proportion of gold and silver as would make the tables and basons as large as he proposed:* 18 And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out [their wings,] and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD*. 19 All [this, said David,] the LORD made me understand in writing by [his] hand upon me, [even] all the works of this pattern; *he had it by particular and divine direction, as plainly as if God had written every idea on his mind, or had delivered it to a prophet, and he had given it in writing to David*†.

20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do [it:] fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, [even] my God, [will be] with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD; *he urges his own experience of*

* God is described as riding on the wings of angels, because the glory rested upon the cherubims; therefore it is called his chariot, Psalm xviii. 10.

† It is probable that the Roman and Greek architecture was derived from this. It is certain, that the earliest models of the Grecian buildings are most perfect. Human wisdom, industry, and study, never made any improvement in this art, through so many ages, though in all other arts they have improved.

God's goodness, and his appointment of Solomon to the work; that God would both help him and restrain his enemies; and make all quiet and prosperous till the work was finished. 21 And, behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, [even they shall be with thee] for all the service of the house of God: and [there shall be] with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man for any manner of service: also the princes and all the people [will be] wholly at thy commandment; *many were ready to help him, some to advise him, and some to labour; all would lend an helping hand to finish this great and pious design.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It is the duty of every one, even the greatest of men, to seek and keep God's commandments. They are our rule. We should inquire after them, study them carefully, and pray for understanding hearts. We should be excited hereto, by considering that God and man are witnesses to the engagements we are under, and the instructions we receive; and that both will be witnesses against us, if we are ignorant and disobedient.

2. We learn that perseverance is necessary to obtain divine acceptance and approbation. It is not sufficient sometimes to do God's commandments and keep his judgments, but we must be constant in it. Many begin well, but grow bad, and *fail of the grace of God:* it is our duty *to be patient in well-doing,* and *faithful to the end, that we may receive a crown of life and glory.*

3. David's advice to Solomon is worthy the attention of all young people; to *know God,* inquire after him, his nature, works, and word; to serve him, that is, to worship and obey him, with upright aims, and observe all he commands with cheerfulness and gladness of heart. Religion is our business and our pleasure. What an awful motive is the omniscience of God! He knows what we have been taught; the warnings and admonitions we have received; what professions and promises we have made; and what vows and engagements we are under. What an encouraging motive is this, *if you seek him, he will be found of you,* will furnish you with assistance, and communicate all necessary blessings; *but if you forsake him,* whatever has been done, whatever expectations or experience you may have had, though you are ever so wise or great, though you are the sons of God's servants, and of prayers and promises, yet *he will cast you off for*

ever; will never look favourably on you any more. Let young persons *hear and fear;* and *serve the God of their fathers with a perfect heart.* We reflect,

4. What an encouragement it is to all, especially to the rising generation, that the God of our fathers will be with us, to assist and strengthen us. He carried them through the services and sufferings of life. There is the same power, the same love, and the same promises for our support. *He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* Young persons should plead these promises; and exalt, and serve, and trust in their fathers' God; and let this be their prayer, *The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

David by his example urges the people to contribute towards building the temple; which they do generously; he give thanks on the occasion, and all the people do homage to God.

1 FURTHERMORE David the king, *having finished what he had to say to Solomon, turns himself to the people, to stir them up to help Solomon, and he* said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, [yet] young and tender, and the work [is] great: for the palace [is] not for man, but for the LORD God. 2 Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for [things to be made] of gold, and the silver for [things] of silver, and the brass for [things] of brass, the iron for [things] of iron, and wood for [things] of wood; onyx stones, and [stones] to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. 3 Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, [which] I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, 4 [Even] three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses [withal;] *he tells them what large preparations he had made, and moreover, besides what was necessary to build and furnish the houses, he had given all this out of his own private property, to beautify and adorn*

the apartments, the porch, and the chambers: 5 The gold for [things] of gold, and the silver for [things] of silver, and for all manner of work [to be made] by the hands of artificers; *he had left enough to provide materials and pay the workmen.* And who [then] is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD? *to fill his hands with gifts, and offer them to the service of God, as he had done.* 6 Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work, offered willingly, *generously, and from a good principle, and a great sum;* 7 And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. 8 And they with whom [precious] stones were found, *willingly parted with their jewels and ornaments, and* gave [them] to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite, *who was keeper of the treasures of God's house.* 9 Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD; *not by any constraint, but willingly, for the honour of God and the support of his worship:* and David the king also rejoiced with great joy. *It was a singular comfort to the good old king to see the people so willing; that his example and exhortation had so good an effect; it gave him hopes that the work would go on prosperously, and be happily completed.*

10 Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation*: and David said, Blessed [be] thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. 11 Thine, O LORD, [is] the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all [that is] in the heaven and in the earth [is thine;] thine [is] the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all; *he expresses a deep sense of the divine excellency and perfections; that he has these excellencies in himself, and reigns supreme; having universal influence and authority over these lower worlds, and all the circumstances of mankind.* 12 Both riches and honour [come] of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand [is] power and might; and in thine hand [it is] to make great, and to give strength unto all. 13 Now therefore,

* It is no wonder that such a sight fired his muse. Indeed it is natural to expect when David rejoiced, to find afterwards a psalm of praise. Accordingly we have here one of his noblest, most devout, and spirited compositions, though he was now in the decline of life.

our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name; *he acknowledges with thankfulness his providence, which had furnished them with what they had contributed, and his grace, which inclined them to it; and he mingles with these thankful acknowledgments the deepest humility.* 14 But who [am] I, and what [is] my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort, *so plentifully and so cheerfully?* for all things [come] of thee, and of thine own have we given thee, *have only returned what thou hast lent us; we have no reason for boasting, because all the power and ability came from thee.* 15 For we [are] strangers before thee, and sojourners, as [were] all our fathers; *we are not proprietors, but stewards, the land is God's*:* our days on the earth [are] as a shadow, and [there is] none abiding; *we have but a little time to live, and must leave all our treasures behind; how then can we better employ it than in God's service, who can give us heavenly treasures, and an eternal inheritance.* 16 O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name [cometh] of thine hand, and [is] all thine own; *he repeats this important truth, to fix it deeply on his own mind and theirs.* 17 I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee; *he had the highest satisfaction in the consciousness of his own integrity, and it was a great additional comfort that there was such a disposition in the people.* 18 O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thought of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee; *by thy grace keep them in the same pious disposition, that they may not be weary in well-doing:* 19 And give unto Solomon my son a perfect, *or upright,* heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all [these things,] and to build the palace, [for] the which I have made provision; *to finish the work, and behave becoming one so highly favoured. Then David called upon them to give their assent to the prayers he had presented to God, and join in this act of adoration.*

20 And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, *gave a loud acclamation or amen,* and bowed

* This is an allusion to LEV. XXV. 23.

down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king; *prostrated themselves before the Lord, and then bowed to the king, to thank him for all his kindness and care towards Israel, and the happiness they had enjoyed in his reign.* 21 And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, [even] a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, [and] a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel; *these were chiefly peace offerings, on which they feasted and rejoiced together:* 22 And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed [him] unto the LORD [to be] the chief governor*, and Zadok [to be] priest; *he was made high priest instead of Abiathar; and thus the priesthood was translated to the eldest branch of Aaron's family, in which it was before Eli's time.*

23 Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him; *it is called the throne of the Lord, because God was Israel's king.* 24 And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king; *swore allegiance to him, gave the hand under Solomon; either the ancient form or the ancient language was still used.* 25 And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him [such] royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel†.

26 Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. 27 And the time that he reigned over Israel [was] forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three [years] reigned he in Jerusalem. 28 And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead. 29 Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they [are] written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer, 30 With all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.

* Solomon was before anointed, on occasion of Absalom's conspiracy, by a few of David's servants; but now by the representatives of the whole kingdom, and in a more solemn manner.

† This chapter concludes with an account of David's death; but we shall find some other particulars of his reign before that event happened, in 1 Kings, chap. ii., which need explanation, and deserve attention, and may be read after this.

REFLECTIONS.

1. The generosity of David and the states of Israel should excite us to imitate it; and especially their zeal for the house and service of God. What a noble figure David here makes, compared with many other princes. Let all give encouragement to the worship of God according to their ability. It is a good work; and *with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

2. It is our duty, by our exhortations and example, to lead others to promote the service and honour of God. Those who are most able should lead the way in acts of generosity, set good examples, as David did, and do nothing that is mean. Then they may with a good grace, and hopes of success, exhort others to do the like. It is the duty of christians to consider one another, and *to provoke unto love and to good works.*

3. It affords great satisfaction to a good man when leaving the world, to see a spirit of piety and generosity prevailing. *David the king rejoiced with great joy.* It revived his good old heart to see such a disposition in the people, and especially that his own example should have such a good effect. It gives joy to aged and dying saints to see those who are likely to survive them zealous for God and religion, and for the support of his house and worship. It gives them hopes that religion will be supported and maintained in the world; and that the rising generation will walk in God's ways, and transmit religion to those who shall come after them.

4. All good dispositions and good deeds are to be ascribed to God. All our good things come from him; he gives us wealth and plenty; *both riches and honour come of thee.* And if we have hearts to do good with it, that also should be ascribed to him, *who worketh in us to will and to do.* Good deeds and generous actions should not lead us to indulge pride and vanity, but all should be ascribed to God, the fountain of good. Let us not glory in riches, generosity, and strength, but *glory only in the Lord.*

5. A serious consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of human life, should excite us to every good work: *v.* 15., *Our days are as a shadow; we are strangers;* have but a little time to serve God in; and should therefore embrace every opportunity, and every day be kind and bountiful to others. If any day hath passed without doing something for the glory of God and the good of

others, we should say with an eastern monarch, 'I have lost a day;' for *we know not what shall be on the morrow.* So vain and transient is life! *The fashion of this world passeth away:* therefore let us make a good use of it, by being *ready to distribute and willing to communicate,* both in temporal and spiritual things. This will make our lives comfortable, and death happy. We shall *give up our account with joy, and be rewarded at the resurrection of the just.*

6. It is a great satisfaction to be able to appeal to God for the sincerity of what we do, *v.* 17. No other sacrifices are acceptable. Let us inquire into our aims and motives, that it is not to be seen of men, and to gain their esteem, but to glorify God, and to approve ourselves in his sight. Others may misrepresent our motives, and impute them to a bad principle; but if we are conscious of our integrity, that is enough.

7. Whenever there is a good disposition in the heart, it should be our desire and prayer that it be kept there. When we find this in our own hearts, let us pray, as *v.* 18., *Lord, keep it there,* that it be not lost or weakened. Also, when in the hearts of others, when we see relations and friends in a good mind, showing good inclinations and desires, let us pray that God would keep them there; that they may not be lost or weakened; that he would establish every good thought and design; that nothing may remove or destroy it; that it be not *like the morning cloud or the early dew that soon passeth away.* We learn once more,

8. That pious parents are greatly concerned for their children's souls. David, amidst all his joys, hopes, and expectations, was chiefly concerned about Solomon's piety, *v.* 19., that he should have *a perfect heart.* He does not pray that God would make him a rich, great, and learned man; but an honest and holy man. That is the main thing; without it, every thing else is but a snare and a curse. This is the best blessing which can be sought for our children; and God grant that they may all attain it.

THE

SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES.

INTRODUCTION.

This Book chiefly relates what concerns the kingdom of Judah, with an intermixture of some few passages concerning the kingdom of Israel.

CHAPTER 1.

The solemn offering of Solomon at Gibeon; his choice of wisdom is blessed by God, who adds to it riches and honour; his forces and wealth.

1 AND Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God [was] with him and magnified him exceedingly. 2 Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers. 3 So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that [was] at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. 4 But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to [the place which] David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. 5 Moreover the brasen altar, that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it. 6 And Solomon went up thither to the brasen altar before the LORD, which was at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.

7 In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. 8 And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. 9 Now, O LORD God, let thy

promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. 10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, [that is so] great? 11 And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: 12 Wisdom and knowledge [is] granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that [have been] before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

13 Then Solomon came [from his journey] to the high place that [was] at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel. 14 And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. 15 And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem [as plenteous] as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that [are] in the vale for abundance. 16 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. 17 And they fetched up, and brought forth out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred [shekels] of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so brought they out [horses] for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, by their means.

CHAPTER II.

Solomon's labourers for the building of the temple; his message to Huram; and Huram's kind answer.

1 AND Solomon determined to build an house for the name of the LORD, and an house for his kingdom. 2 And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred to oversee them.

3 And Solomon sent to Huram the king of Tyre, saying, As

thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein, [even so deal with me.] 4 Behold, I build an house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate [it] to him, [and] to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shew bread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This [is an ordinance] for ever to Israel. 5 And the house which I build [is] great: for great [is] our God above all gods. 6 But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who [am] I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him? 7 Send me now therefore a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and in crimson, and in blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that [are] with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide. 8 Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon: for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon; and, behold, my servants [shall be] with thy servants, 9 Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build [shall be] wonderful great. 10 And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

11 Then Huram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them. 12 Huram said moreover, Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding, that might build an house for the LORD, and an house for his kingdom. 13 And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Huram my father's, 14 The son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father [was] a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father. 15 Now therefore the wheat, and the barley, the oil, and the wine, which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants: 16 And we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as

thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem. 17 And Solomon numbered all the strangers that [were] in the land of Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them; and they were found an hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand and six hundred. 18 And he set threescore and ten thousand of them [to be] bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand [to be] hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people a work.

CHAPTER III.

The situation of the temple, and the time it was begun; the measure and ornaments of the house; and a description of the cherubims.

1 THEN Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where [the LORD] appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 2 And he began to build in the second [day] of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign.

3 Now these [are the things wherein] Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure [was] threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits. 4 And the porch that [was] in the front [of the house,] the length [of it was] according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height [was] an hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold. 5 And the greater house he ceiled with fir tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm trees and chains. 6 And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold [was] gold of Parvaim. 7 He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold; and graved cherubims on the walls.

8 And he made the most holy house, the length whereof [was] according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, [amounting] to six hundred talents. 9 And the weight of the nails [was] fifty shekels of gold. And he overlaid the upper chambers with gold. 10 And in the most holy house he made

two cherubims of image work, and overlaid them with gold. 11 And the wings of the cherubims [were] twenty cubits long: one wing [of the one cherub was] five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing [was likewise] five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub. 12 And [one] wing of the other cherub [was] five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing [was] five cubits [also,] joining to the wing of the other cherub. 13 The wings of these cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood on their feet, and their faces [were] inward.

14 And he made the vail [of] blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon.

15 Also he made before the house two pillars of thirty and five cubits high, and the chapiter that [was] on the top of each of them [was] five cubits. 16 And he made chains, [as] in the oracle, and put [them] on the heads of the pillars; and made an hundred pomegranates, and put [them] on the chains. 17 And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz.

CHAPTER IV.

A description of the brasen altar, and the molten sea; the ten lavers, the candlesticks, the tables, and the instruments of gold.

1 MOREOVER he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof. 2 Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. 3 And under it [was] the similitude of oxen, which did compass it round about: ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about. Two rows of oxen [were] cast, when it was cast. 4 It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea [was set] above upon them, and all their hinder parts [were] inward. 5 And the thickness of it [was] an hand breadth, and the brim of it like the work of the

brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; [and] it received and held three thousand baths. 6 He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them: such things as they offered for the burnt offering they washed in them; but the sea [was] for the priests to wash in. 7 And he made ten candlesticks of gold according to their form, and set [them] in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left. 8 He made also ten tables, and placed [them] in the temple, five on the right side, and five on the left. And he made an hundred basons of gold. 9 Furthermore he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid the doors of them with brass. 10 And he set the sea on the right side of the east end, over against the south.

11 And Huram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basons. And Huram finished the work that he was to make for king Solomon for the house of God; 12 [To wit,] the two pillars, and the pommels, and the chapiters [which were] on the top of the two pillars, and the two wreaths to cover the two pommels of the chapiters which [were] on the top of the pillars; 13 And four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths; two rows of pomegranates on each wreath, to cover the two pommels of the chapiters which [were] upon the pillars. 14 He made also bases, and lavers made he upon the bases; 15 One sea, and twelve oxen under it. 16 The pots also, and the shovels, and the flesh hooks, and all their instruments, did Huram his father make to king Solomon for the house of the LORD of bright brass. 17 In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredathah. 18 Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out. 19 And Solomon made all the vessels that [were for] the house of God, the golden altar also, and the tables whereon the shew bread [was set;] 20 Moreover the candlesticks with their lamps, that they should burn after the manner before the oracle, of pure gold; 21 And the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs [made he of] gold, [and] that perfect gold; 22 And the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers, [of] pure gold: and the entry of the house, the inner doors thereof for the most holy [place,] and the doors of the house of the temple, [were of] gold.

CHAPTER V.

The dedicated treasures are deposited in the temple; the bringing up of the ark of the covenant into the most holy place; while God is praised, he gives them a sign of his favour.

1 THUS all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished: and Solomon brought in [all] the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God.

2 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which [is] Zion. 3 Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast which [was] in the seventh month. 4 And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark. 5 And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that [were] in the tabernacle, these did the priests [and] the Levites bring up. 6 Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude. 7 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy [place, even] under the wings of the cherubims. 8 For the cherubims spread forth [their] wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 9 And they drew out the staves [of the ark,] that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day. 10 [There was] nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put [therein] at Horeb, when the LORD made [a covenant] with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

11 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy [place:] (for all the priests [that were] present were sanctified, [and] did not [then] wait by course: 12 Also the Levites [which were] the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons, and their brethren, [being] arrayed

in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:) 13 It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers [were] as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up [their] voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, [saying,] For [he is] good; for his mercy [endureth] for ever: that [then] the house was filled with a cloud, [even] the house of the LORD; 14 So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

CHAPTER VI.

Solomon having blessed the people, praiseth God for the performance of his promise to David concerning the building of the house; and his prayer at the consecration of the temple.

1 THEN said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. 2 But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever. 3 And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: and all the congregation of Israel stood. 4 And he said, Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled [that] which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying, 5 Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build an house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel: 6 But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel. 7 Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 8 But the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart: 9 Notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name. 10 The LORD therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my

father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 11 And in it I have put the ark, wherein [is] the covenant of the LORD, that he made with the children of Israel.

12 And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands: 13 For Solomon had made a brasen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven, 14 And said, O LORD God of Israel, [there is] no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and [showest] mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts: 15 Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled [it] with thine hand, as [it is] this day. 16 Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me. 17 Now then, O LORD God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David. 18 But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built! 19 Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee: 20 That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldst put thy name there: to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place. 21 Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place, [even] from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.

22 If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house; 23 Then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head; and by justifying the righteous, by giving him according to his righteousness.

24 And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; and shall return and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house; 25 Then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers.

26 When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; [yet] if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them: 27 Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.

28 If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts or caterpillers; if their enemies besiege them in the cities of their land; whatsoever sore, or whatsoever sickness [there] be: 29 [Then] what prayer [or] what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house: 30 Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men:) 31 That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

32 Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray in this house; 33 Then hear thou from the heavens, [even] from thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name and fear thee, as [doth] thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.

34 If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; 35 Then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

36 If they sin against thee, (for [there is] no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before

[their] enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; 37 Yet [if] they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly: 38 If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and [toward] the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: 39 Then hear thou from the heavens, [even] from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.

40 Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and [let] thine ears [be] attent unto the prayer [that is made] in this place. 41 Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength; let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. 42 O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant.

CHAPTER VII.

The acceptance of Solomon's prayer testified by fire from heaven; upon which the people worship God; and Solomon sacrifices at the dedication.

1 NOW when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. 2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. 3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, [saying,] For [he is] good; for his mercy [endureth] for ever.

4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. 5 And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and

two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. 6 And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of music of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy [endureth] for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood. 7 Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that [was] before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

8 Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt. 9 And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days. 10 And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people. 11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

12 And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. 13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer [that is made] in this place. 16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. 17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; 18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man [to be] ruler in Israel. 19 But

if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; 20 Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it [to be] a proverb, and a by-word among all nations. 21 And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house? 22 And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

CHAPTER VIII.

An account of Solomon's buildings; the remnants of the Hittites, &c., made tributaries; and Solomon's yearly sacrifices.

1 AND it came to pass at the end of twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of the LORD, and his own house, 2 That the cities which Huram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there. 3 And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it. 4 And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store cities, which he built in Hamath. 5 Also he built Bethhoron the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fenced cities, with walls, gates, and bars; 6 And Baalath, and all the store cities that Solomon had, and all the chariot cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion.

7 [As for] all the people [that were] left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which [were] not of Israel, 8 [But] of their children, who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day. 9 But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they [were] men of war, and chief of his

captains, and captains of his chariots and horsemen. 10 And these [were] the chief of king Solomon's officers, [even] two hundred and fifty, that bare rule over the people.

11 And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because [the places are] holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.

12 Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the LORD on the altar of the LORD, which he had built before the porch, 13 Even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, [even] in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

14 And he appointed according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required: the porters also by their courses at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded. 15 And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures.

16 Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD, and until it was finished. [So] the house of the LORD was perfected.

17 Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, at the sea side in the land of Edom. 18 And Huram sent him by the hands of his servants ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought [them] to king Solomon.

CHAPTER IX.

The queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon; her admiration of his wisdom; and account of his riches and death.

1 AND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. 2 And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not. 3 And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, 4 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, his cupbearers also, and their apparel, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. 5 And she said to the king, [It was] a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom: 6 Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen [it:] and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: [for] thou exceedest the fame that I heard. 7 Happy [are] thy men, and happy [are] these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. 8 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, [to be] king for the LORD thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice. 9 And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon. 10 And the servants also of Huram, and the servants of Solomon, which brought gold from Ophir, brought algum trees and precious stones. 11 And the king made [of] the algum trees terraces to the house of the LORD, and to the king's palace, and harps and psalteries for singers: and there were none such seen before in the land of Judah. 12 And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides [that] which

she had brought unto the king. So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants.

13 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold; 14 Besides [that which] chapmen and merchants brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon. 15 And king Solomon made two hundred targets [of] beaten gold: six hundred [shekels] of beaten gold went to one target. 16 And three hundred shields [made he of] beaten gold: three hundred [shekels] of gold went to one shield. And the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. 17 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. 18 And [there were] six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, [which were] fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting place, and two lions standing by the stays: 19 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom. 20 And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon [were of] gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon [were of] pure gold: none [were of] silver; it was [not] any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon. 21 For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. 22 And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. 23 And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart. 24 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. 25 And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; whom he bestowed in the chariot-cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

26 And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. 27 And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycamore-trees that [are] in the low plains in abundance. 28 And they brought unto Solomon horses out of Egypt, and out of all lands.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, [are] they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the son of Nebat? 30 And Solomon

reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. 31 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER X.

Rehoboam by refusing the old men's counsel, causeth the ten tribes to revolt; at which he fleeth.

1 AND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for to Shechem were all Israel come to make him king. 2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who [was] in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king, heard [it,] that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt. 3 And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying, 4 Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee. 5 And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed.

6 And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye [me] to return answer to this people? 7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever. 8 But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him. 9 And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us? 10 And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou [it] somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little [finger] shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11 For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I [will chastise you] with scorpions. 12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam

on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day. 13 And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, 14 And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I [will chastise you] with scorpions. 15 So the king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 And when all Israel [saw] that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and [we have] none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: [and] now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents. 17 But [as for] the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18 Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram that [was] over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. But king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to [his] chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. 19 And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

CHAPTER XI.

Rehoboam raising an army to subdue Israel, is forbidden by the prophet Shemaiah: an account of Rehoboam's wives and children.

1 AND when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen [men,] which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. 2 But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 3 Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, 4 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam.

5 And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for

defence in Judah. 6 He built even Beth-lehem, and Etam, and Tekoa, 7 And Beth-zur, and Shoco, and Adullam. 8 And Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph, 9 And Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah, 10 And Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which [are] in Judah, and in Benjamin fenced cities. 11 And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine. 12 And in every several city [he put] shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

13 And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. 14 For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD: 15 And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made. 16 And after them out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers. 17 So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon.

18 And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, [and] Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse; 19 Which bare him children: Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zaham. 20 And after her he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom; which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith. 21 And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.) 22 And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, [to be] ruler among his brethren: for [he thought] to make him king. 23 And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives.

CHAPTER XII.

Rehoboam forsaking God, is punished by Shishak's invasion; an account of Rehoboam's reign and death.

1 AND it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. 2 And it came to pass, [that] in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD, 3 With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people [were] without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. 4 And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.

5 Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and [to] the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. 6 Whereupon the princes of Israel, and the king, humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD [is] righteous. 7 And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves, [therefore] I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. 8 Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. 9 So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 10 Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed [them] to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. 11 And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber. 12 And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy [him] altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

13 So king Rehoboam, strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam [was] one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name [was] Naamah an Ammonitess. 14 And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD. 15 Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, [are] they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? And [there were] wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. 16 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XIII.

In 1 Kings xv., at the beginning, we have a general account of Abijah's reign and character. His heart was not perfect like David's; he made a fair show, but wanted sincerity. We have here a larger account of Abijah; his war with Jeroboam, and his victory over him.

1 NOW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah. 2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also [was] Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam; *in which probably Jeroboam was the aggressor.* 3 And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, [even] four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, [being] mighty men of valour; *these were prodigious armies, consisting of the whole strength of each kingdom.*

4 And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which [is] in mount Ephraim; *a parley was agreed upon to see if the matter could be accommodated, and Abijah stood so as Jeroboam and the captains might hear him,* and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel; 5 Ought ye not to know, *that is, consider and acknowledge,* that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, [even] to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? *a perpetual covenant, as salt preserves from corruption; or rather, a solemn covenant made by sacrifices, which were always*

salted, Lev. ii. 13. *He does not exhort them to return to the house of David, because God had otherwise determined it, but not to fight against it.* 6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord. 7 And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial; *this was the character of his subjects, especially the commanders of them, who easily changed their religion and forsook God;* and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender hearted, and could not withstand them; *when he was young and unexperienced in state matters, and especially in war, and was tender hearted or cowardly*.* 8 And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye [be] a great multitude, and [there are] with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods; *or, though you be a great multitude, ye have golden calves among you, and therefore your numbers will not save you.* 9 Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of [other] lands, *without any regard to their country or family?* so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, [the same] may be a priest of [them that are] no gods. 10 But as for us, the LORD [is] our God, and we have not forsaken him *as you have done,* (1 Kings xii. 28.); and the priests which minister unto the LORD [are] the sons of Aaron, and the Levites [wait] upon [their] business; *his worship is maintained and his service performed by them in an orderly manner:* 11 And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shew bread also [set they in order] upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening; *we omit nothing which the law has required, by day or night. It was politic to recite the several parts of the temple worship, and it was all the good he had to say for himself:* for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, *those rules and directions he has given us in charge;* but ye have forsaken him. 12 And, behold, God himself [is] with us for [our] captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD

* This was wrong to reflect on his father, as it does not appear that he wanted courage, for he raised an army, and would have attacked them, but God forbade him. It was most to his purpose to put it on this footing, intimating that he durst not have done it at any other time, and that his conduct was disingenuous and impious.

God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper; *we pay a strict regard to his laws in war as well as peace, therefore ye do not fight so much against me as against Jehovah.*

18 But Jeroboam, *who came not so much to argue as to fight, and was determined that the longest sword should carry it,* caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment [was] behind them *. 14 And when Judah looked back, *hearing a noise behind them,* behold, the battle [was] before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets, *imploring the divine aid, and encouraging their expectations from God, according to his promise,* Numb. x. 9. 15 Then the men of Judah gave a shout, *to terrify the enemy and express their confidence in God;* and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah; *he terrified the Israelites so that they fled without a stroke.* 16 And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand. 17 And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. 18 Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, *but did not become subject to Judah;* and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers, *and not upon their own valour.* 19 And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him, Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof, and Ephrain with the towns thereof †. 20 Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the LORD struck him, and he died. *Jeroboam never recovered this blow; the Lord struck him with some painful disease, under which he languished for near two years, and then died miserably.*

21 But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters. 22 And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, *or wise sentences,* [are] written in the story of the prophet Iddo; *they were worthy recording in the commentary of the prophet Iddo, of whom we read,* chap. xii. 15.

* He was probably so much moved as not to trust to his numbers, without recourse to a stratagem, which he thought was worth all Abijah's fine speeches, and would soon give an answer to all his arguments. If a parley was agreed upon, it was base to take this advantage.

† It is likely that the calf was carried with them, and secured by some who fled, or was removed from Beth-el for safety; for we can scarce suppose that when Abijah took the city, he would have left it there.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Let us adore the goodness and mercy of God in overlooking the infirmities, and pardoning the transgressions, of his people. 1 Kings xv. 5. David had many infirmities not mentioned there; the matter of Uriah is forgiven; the manner in which he is spoken of is remarkably gracious, and an encouragement to repentance, and to earnest endeavours to serve God with sincerity, and not turn aside from any thing which he commands us. *There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.*

2. It is a sign of true wisdom to try reason before force; so Abijah did. He proposed terms of peace before he entered on action, which, whoever gained, must be attended with prodigious slaughter. Force is the last refuge of a king; and those who are wise and good are always tender of the lives of their subjects, and do not delight in war.

3. It is common for those who want real religion to boast much of the profession and external forms of it. How eloquently Abijah talked of the regular order of the priests, and the exactness of the service of the temple, when his heart was not right with God, but followed the vices of his father. So the Pharisee said, *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men.* Thus too many christians boast of their zeal, the regularity of their attendance on divine worship, and exactness in all points of form and ceremony, while their hearts are far from God, and strangers to the life of religion: they think themselves better than others, when perhaps they are really more criminal in the sight of God. *Be not deceived, God will not be mocked.* If the heart be not upright, all profession is vain. They are hypocrites in heart, let them be ever so exact in the rites of worship, or talk ever so fluently, or eloquently, or confidently of their own goodness. They are an abomination in the sight of God.

CHAP. XIV. and CHAP. XV.

In this and the following chapter we have an account of Asa's piety and prudence; his great success over the army of the Ethiopians; the message God sent by the prophet, and the happy effect it had upon the prince and people.

1 So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years. 2 And Asa did [that which was] good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God, *and began a reformation in the land:* 3 For he took away the altars of the strange [gods,] and the high places *of strange gods, (for other high places were left,* chap. xv. 17., 1 Kings xv. 14.), and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: 4 And commanded Judah, *by a royal edict,* to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. 5 Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him; *so that no one made any opposition to his attempt.* 6 And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the Lord had given him rest. 7 Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about [them] walls, and towers, gates, and bars, [while] the land [is] yet before us, *let us prepare for war before the enemy attacks us;* because we have sought the Lord our God, we have sought [him,] and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered: *had no disturbance from the Israelites or other neighbours while they were thus fortifying themselves.*

8 And Asa had an army [of men] that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these [were] mighty men of valour.

9 And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian *, with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah, *a frontier town.* 10 Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of

* This should be *the Arabian,* the Ethiopians being too far off; the circumtances of the tents and cattle, v. 15., confirms this.

Zephathah at Mareshah; *Asa attacked him before he had invaded the land.* 11 And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, [it is] nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou [art] our God; let not man prevail against thee. *Asa offered this short but comprehensive prayer in the face of the army, expressing their trust in God's power, their encouragement because he was their God, and would defend his own religion and his own cause.* 12 So the LORD smote, *or struck terror into,* the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. 13 And Asa and the people that [were] with him pursued them unto Gerar, *a city of the Philistines, who were probably allies:* and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves, *nor rally their forces;* for they were destroyed before the LORD and before his host; and they, *Asa's army,* carried away very much spoil. 14 And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the LORD, *a terror from God,* came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them, *which they had taken from the countries they had ravaged.* 15 They smote also the tents of cattle, *the tents in which the Arabians lived,* and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, *which were very common among them,* and returned to Jerusalem.

CHAP. XV. 1 And the spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: 2 And he went out to meet Asa, *not to compliment but exhort him, lest he and the people should be puffed up with this victory and slacken their diligence,* and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD [is] with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, *worship him alone,* he will be found of you; but *presume not on his favour without this, for* if ye forsake him, he will forsake you; *if you abandon his worship and fall into apostacy, he will cast you off. Then follows an illustration of this:* 3 Now for a long season Israel [hath been] without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law*. 4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel and sought him, he was found of them, (as Judges iii. 9, 15. x. 10, 16. 1 Sam. vii. 4, &c.) 5 And in those times [there was] no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came

* Some think this refers to the state of the kingdom of Israel at that time, as separate from that of Judah. Others, to the whole nation of the Jews in the time of the Judges.

in, but great vexations [were] upon all the inhabitants of the countries. 6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city, *one part of the people of Israel destroyed another:* for God did vex them with all adversity; *upon this the prophet grounds his advice.* 7 Be ye strong therefore, *in rooting out idolatry,* and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded; *as you may learn from this signal victory you have obtained.* 8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded* the prophet, he took courage and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, *from the cities taken by Abijah his father,* and renewed the altar of the LORD, that [was] before the porch of the LORD, *and which by long neglect was decayed.* 9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God [was] with him. 10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa, *at the feast of weeks, or pentecost.* 11 And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil [which] they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep, *the spoils of the Arabians; burnt offerings for thankfulness to God, and peace offerings to renew their covenant, by eating part and giving the rest to the priests and the people.* 12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul†; 13 That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman, (Deut. xiii. 9.) 14 And they sware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, *with expressions of great joy,* and with trumpets *of metal,* and with cornets. 15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, *that is, sincerely and heartily; this was the case with the greatest part of them however some were altered afterwards;* and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about, *and made them reap the happy fruits of their reformation, in their present peace and prosperity.*

* Rather, of Azariah the son of Oded, as it is in some of the ancient versions.

† They bound themselves to what was their duty before, but thus they acknowledged the reasonableness of the precept, armed themselves against temptation, and encouraged one another; and they farther bound themselves to put the laws against idolatry into execution.

16 And also [concerning] Maachah the mother of Asa the king*, he removed her from [being] queen†, *took away her ensign of authority:* because she had made an idol in a grove, and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped [it,] and burnt [it] at the brook Kidron, *destroyed it with the utmost contempt.* 17 But the high places were not taken away out of Israel‡: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days; *perfect in this, that he hated all idolatrous worship.*

18 And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, *and which he had taken from Jeroboam, but which he had not brought to the house of God,* and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels, *which he had taken from the Arabians.* 19 And there was no [more] war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THOSE who resolutely set about reformation will probably meet with less difficulties than they imagine, *v.* 5. It is a discouragement to many, when they think others are gone too far to mend, and there is no room to hope; but let not such be discouraged; vice may be weaker, and a disposition to amend, stronger than we imagine. God may succeed our endeavours. *Though iniquity should abound, let not our love wax cold;* at least let us do our duty, and leave the event to God.

2. Our rest and peace ought to be thankfully acknowledged, and carefully improved: Asa did so, *v.* 6, 7. We should own the hand of God in public rest, in the peace and comfort of our families, in our ease of body and quietness of mind, and improve it to work the works of God, to grow in wisdom and holiness, and exert ourselves to do good.

3. Whatever enemies attack us, let us encourage ourselves in the almighty power of God, as Asa did, *v.* 11. *We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers. Without*

* She was his grandmother, but called his mother, because probably she had the care of his education, his mother dying while he was young, and so she was regent during his minority.

† As the word *being* is not in the original, some interpret it, that he removed her from the queen, Asa's wife, lest she should corrupt her to idolatry.

‡ Perhaps these may refer to the high places in Ephraim, where the people were so much wedded to them, that he thought it not good policy to remove them; or rather, to the high places in which God was worshipped, though he destroyed all their idols.

are fightings, and within are fears; but let us still remember his strength; that we are fighting in his cause; and therefore put our trust in him; and not fear what earth or hell can do against us.

4. We learn, that God will be with us while we are with him. chap. xv. 2. He will not forsake the souls that seek him and cleave to him. *If we forsake him,* what can we expect but that *he will forsake us.* Let this engage us to be active and resolute in religion. It is not without its reward, *v.* 7. It brings present peace and joy, and hope of a glorious reward hereafter.

5. Those who would seek God, so as to find him, must do it with their whole hearts, *v.* 12. Must seek him by fervent, constant prayer; seek his favour by a course of piety, make heart-work of religion, and engage all the powers of the soul to serve God; for thus only will they be accepted of him.

6. It is wise to enter into solemn engagements to be the Lord's, and to renew them with cheerfulness and joy. It is proper at all times, to prevent temptations, and to keep us resolute; but especially in times of degeneracy, when we have bad examples and many temptations about us, we should renew them cheerfully. The people of Judah were not ashamed nor afraid to let all know that they were for God. Times of sacramental engagements should be times of rejoicing in the goodness of God. They are pledges of his love, means of holiness, and a seal of the covenant of eternal life. We are taught,

7. Not to regard our wicked relations, when we are engaged in the cause of God and religion. So Asa acted in the case of his grandmother; neither her authority, her age, her sex, or his obligations to her, prevented him from removing her. Let our reformation begin at home; let us mind first our own family, and not spare sin in the nearest relative or dearest friend. This will show that our heart is upright, and we shall not be ashamed.

CHAPTER XVI.

Compared with 1 Kings, chap. xv. 25, to the end.

Asa's confidence in the king of Syria; the message of a prophet to him, on account of this confidence; with the close of his reign and death.

1 IN the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa* Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built, *or fortified,* Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah; *being a frontier town it cut off the communication, and was a place they could not easily pass without discovery.* 2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 3 [There is] a league between me and thee, as [there was] between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me †. 4 And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali; *Ben-hadad attacked him in the north, while he fortified Ramah in the south.* 5 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard [it,] that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease; *it had the desired effect.* 6 Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building, and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah, *fortified his own frontier towns* ‡.

7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of

* There is a remarkable difference between the date of this and the parallel place in Kings. Here it is said, in the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign; Josephus says in the twenty-sixth. There is either a mistake in some early transcriber, or they compute from different periods, the death of the possessor, the establishment of the empire, or some remarkable action, as was the case of some Greek and Roman emperors. So Augustus has three different periods assigned him by three different historians.

† This was held lawful in cases of great necessity: but there was no necessity to use these treasures now; the thing was evil in itself, it was done from a bad principle and for a bad end, to make Baasha violate the public faith.

‡ So fearful was Asa lest Baasha should seize his kingdom, that he made a great cave under ground; perhaps to hide himself and his treasures, Jer. xli. 9.

Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, *who had promised him success if he continued obedient and faithful*, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand, *and reserved to be a scourge to thy kingdom and posterity hereafter; whereas if he had joined with Baasha against thee, thou shouldst have overthrown them both.* 8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims * a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of [them] whose heart [is] perfect toward him. *This is the general conduct of Providence; his power and might are employed in behalf of those that are upright.* Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars †. 10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison-house, *and in the stocks, whereas he ought to have thanked him,* for [he was] in a rage with him because of this [thing.] And Asa oppressed [some] of the people the same time; *he grew tyrannical in general, or else he punished some of those who interposed in behalf of the prophet.*

11 And behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they [are] written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12 And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease [was] exceeding [great,] yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians; *trusted to their skill and power more than to the goodness of God* ‡.

13 And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign. 14 And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, *a vault which he had made for himself and family among the kings,* and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds [of spices] prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him *of sweet perfumes, in honour to his remains; which was also customary among the Greeks and Romans.*

☞ Before the Reflections read 1 Kings, chap. xv. 25, to the end.

* The inhabitants of Lybia in Africa.

† It was said Asa was perfect all his days, see chap. xv. 17., that is, with regard to his zeal against idolatry; for there were many blemishes in his moral conduct.

‡ Some think this was a punishment for using the prophet so ill; he bruised the prophet's feet, and God now made him a cripple.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We infer, that trust in God is a reasonable and important duty; and he is justly displeased with those that do not rely upon him. Thus, because Asa relied not on God, especially after such extraordinary appearances of his power and goodness in his behalf, he brought wars and heavy judgments upon him. *Cursed is the man that maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.*

2. A belief of God's providence, and experiences of his goodness, should excite us to trust in him for the future. Thus he reminds Asa; *Were not the Ethiopians a great host? Yet the Lord delivered them into thy hand. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.* God has appeared for us in six and in seven troubles; it is therefore unreasonable to distrust him. He is quick-sighted; sees our wants and dangers in a moment; and is ready to help us. Let us therefore *trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.*

3. How difficult is it even for good men to bear plain and useful reproof! Asa was an enemy to idolatry, and had a veneration in general for the prophets; but he was angry at Hanani the prophet, and oppressed him for telling him the truth. Pride is too predominant in those who in the main are good men; therefore they account those enemies that deal plainly with them: but it is an unhappy temper, very uncomfortable to ministers, and dangerous to themselves; and it ought cautiously to be guarded against.

4. Those who are sick and pained are in danger of being fretful and peevish, and should carefully watch against it. It is generally supposed that it was Asa's disorder which made him abuse the prophet, and oppress his people. Let us guard our hearts when visited with pain and sickness, lest we are tempted to murmur against God, and behave in a fretful manner with men. Let those who have such infirmities watch and pray, lest at such times they enter into temptation.

5. The help of creatures should always be sought with a dependance on God. Asa did right in seeking after a physician. There was no blame for that; but he is justly blamed for not seeking the Lord. All creatures are that to us which God makes them. Skilful physicians are but instruments in his hands, and

should be used and acknowledged as such. All second causes are under his direction; without him physicians are of no value. Therefore our eyes should be ever towards the Lord, to bless the means used; and we should own his hand in every success and every disappointment.

6. Honour should be done to the remains and memory of good men, though they may have had their foibles and blemishes. The people were sensible of Asa's worth, and *made a great burning for him*. So we should forget the errors of such, and do honour to their virtues; especially to those who have been publicly and extensively useful. *The memory of the just should be blessed.*

CHAPTER XVII.

Contains the character of Jehoshaphat, and the method he took to promote religion.

1 AND Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. 2 And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. 3 And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; 4 But sought to the [LORD] God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. 5 Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. 6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: *he became zealous and very courageous in God's cause, his heart being lifted up above all discouragements, difficulties and fears:* moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah, *wherein idols were worshipped.*

7 Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, [even] to Ben-hail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nathaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. 8 And with them [he sent] Levites, [even] Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, Levites; and with them

Eli-shama and Jehoram, priests *. 9 And they taught in Judah, and [had] the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. *He soon found the good effect of this, in the prosperity of his kingdom, and in presents from neighbouring nations.*

10 And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that [were] round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. 11 Also [some] of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats.

12 And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store. 13 And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, [were] in Jerusalem. 14 And these [are] the numbers of them according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand. 15 And next to him [was] Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand. 16 And next him [was] Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour. 17 And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand. 18 And next him [was] Jehozabad, and with him an hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war. 19 These waited on the king, besides [those] whom the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah.

* The Levites and priests only were to teach the law; but the princes went with them, to see that it was done, to punish obstinate offenders and idolaters, to give greater respect to the instructors, and solemnity to the work.

CHAPTER XVIII.

☞ This chapter is, in a great measure, the same as 1 Kings, chapter xxii.

Jehoshaphat goes with Ahab against Ramoth-gilead; Ahab, seduced by false prophets, is slain.

1 NOW Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. 2 And after [certain] years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that [he had] with him, and persuaded him to go up [with him] to Ramoth-gilead. 3 And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I [am] as thou [art,] and my people as thy people: and [we will be] with thee in the war.

4 And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day. 5 Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up: for God will deliver [it] into the king's hand.

6 But Jehoshaphat said, [Is there] not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him? 7 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, [There is] yet one man, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same [is] Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. 8 And the king of Israel called for one [of his] officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla. 9 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah sat either of them on his throne, clothed in [their] robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. 10 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the LORD, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed. 11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver [it] into the hand of the king. 12 And the messenger that went

to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets [declare] good to the king with one assent; let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good. 13 And Micaiah said, [As] the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak. 14 And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand. 15 And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the LORD? 16 Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master; let them return [therefore] every man to his house in peace. 17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee [that] he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil? 18 Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD; I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and [on] his left. 19 And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner. 20 Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? 21 And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And [the LORD] said, Thou shalt entice [him,] and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do [even] so. 22 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee.

23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? 24 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. 25 Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; 26 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this [fellow] in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace. 27 And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, [then] hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, all ye people.

28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah

went up to Ramoth-gilead. 29 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle. 30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that [were] with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel. 31 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It [is] the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them [to depart] from him. 32 For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him.

33 And a [certain] man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he said to his chariot man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. 34 And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed [himself] up in [his] chariot against the Syrians until the even: and about the time of the sun going down he died.

CHAPTER XIX.

Jehoshaphat's return to his kingdom; is reproved by a prophet for his alliance with Ahab; and appoints magistrates in the land.

1 AND Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem, *in safety; being delivered from that imminent danger he was in,* ch. xviii. 31, 32. 2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him *before he came to the city, that being thus admonished, he might be more sensible of the goodness of God in his deliverance,* and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? *It was contrary to reason, and to the command of God, to join in alliance with such an infamous wretch as Ahab was:* therefore [is] wrath upon thee from before the LORD, *who brought a numerous army against him, as we read in the next chapter.* 3 Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land; *the high*

places dedicated to the idols, and not those that were dedicated to God; and hast prepared thine heart to seek God; *hast done it sincerely and heartily, with thought and reflection; therefore God did not punish him in his person, but in his posterity.*

4 And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; *he was not angry with the prophet, as his father was with Hanani, but laid it to heart, and set about a further reformation:* and he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers. 5 And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city*, 6 And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who [is] with you in the judgment. 7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do [it†:] for [there is] no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts, *and therefore they ought to imitate him.* 8 Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and [of] the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, *for sacred and civil matters,* and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem, *for causes received from inferior courts who had applied to this higher court*‡. 9 And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart; *with an heart possessed with and guided by the fear of God, acting as in his presence.* 10 And what cause soever, *by way of appeal,* shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, *whether the murder be designed or an accident*§, between law and commandment, statutes, and judgments, *whether the moral law or positive institution, where one party pleads one law and another another, ye shall not only give righteous judgment, but* ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and [so] wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren; *give them charge to behave better and to improve the punishment of others for their own warning;* this do, and ye shall not trespass, *but worthily*

* There were judges in the land before; but they were either indolent or corrupt, therefore he now set up others to punish idolatry, and do justice between man and man; and he gave them a most excellent admonition.

† Judges represent God, have their commission from him, his eyes are upon them, and his honour is concerned in their fidelity.

‡ Some think this was the institution of the sanhedrim, or great council, mentioned in the New Testament, which was the highest court among the Jews.

§ This was particularly necessary, because all the cities of refuge, except Hebron, were in the land of Israel.

and honourably discharge your office. 11 And, behold, Amariah the chief priest [is] over you in all matters of the LORD, *such as are to be judged by the law, the high priest being well acquainted with it;* and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters, *where the law of God gives no particular direction:* also the Levites [shall be] officers before you; *ready to assist and see the orders executed, and follow them with their advice.* Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good; *be not afraid of men, and doubt not but God will bless you.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. PUBLIC solemn instruction is the way to reclaim backsliders, and prevent the apostacy of others. Jehoshaphat began at the right end, in sending princes and priests to instruct the people, as many were ignorant of the law, others were not sufficiently acquainted with it; and thus he promotes the reformation. God is wise and good in appointing stated seasons for religious worship and instruction; in giving pastors and teachers. These have an happy influence on the righteousness, peace and welfare of nations. All christians should say, How beautiful are the feet of those that bring glad tidings, who publish peace, and say unto Sion, Thy God reigneth!

2. God is much displeased with those that associate with the wicked, and strengthen them in their wickedness. Ahab perhaps was hardened by Jehoshaphat's alliance. At least Jehoshaphat showed that he had not that dread of idolatry he should have had, and his people might be encouraged in it by the king's joining with notorious idolaters. Shall the servants of God (*v.* 2.) help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Wicked men hate God, and we should hate them, that is, hate their crimes but not their persons; we should shun their society, and have no communion with them; have no friendship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them; come out from among them, and be separate.

3. Learn to take reproof well, and amend what is amiss. If it is too late to mend the case reproved, be more resolute in others. Jehoshaphat took it well. To atone for his visit to Ahab, he made a visitation through his kingdom, to reform what was amiss, and to make up former defects by greater zeal for the future, and especially by attempts to reform others, and prevent the increase of national guilt.

4. Here is excellent instructions to magistrates; and I wish they were written in every court of justice, to remind them by whose authority they act, whom they represent; that the eyes of God, the supreme judge, are upon them; and that they are accountable to him for all their behaviour, especially in the judgments they pass. And let us all learn to be resolute and courageous in the cause of God and public virtue, and to pray that our magistrates may be such that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.

5. Those who do not prevent sin in others and warn them of it, trespass themselves. *v.* 10., *Ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you and upon your brethren.* It is every one's duty to promote the reformation of others as much as lies in his power; otherwise he is accessary to their guilt and ruin. We should warn men that they trespass not against the Lord, and thus endeavour to prevent national calamities coming upon us; remembering that *righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people, and will* sooner or later, *prove their ruin.*

CHAPTER XX.

The invasion of Judah by a numerous army; Jehoshaphat's conduct on receiving the news of this; the comfortable message he received from God; the grateful acknowledgment of the prince and people for this encouragement; they go forth assured of victory, with the praises of God in their mouths, and the event answers their expectations.

1 IT came to pass after this also, [that] the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them [other] beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle; *things went on well till Jehoshaphat joined with Ahab, which he was now punished for.* 2 Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they [be] in Hazazon-tamar, which [is] Engedi, *on the very borders of thy country.* 3 And Jehoshaphat, *at the remembrance of the judgment denounced against him for helping Ahab,* feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah, *in token*

of his humility, as an acknowledgment of his unworthiness, and his earnest desire of God's help, while he disregarded the calls of nature to attend to the service of God. 4 And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask [help] of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

5 And Jehoshaphat stood *on an eminence* in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court; *the court of the priests newly repaired;* 6 And said, O LORD God of our fathers, [art] not thou God in heaven? and rulest [not] thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand [is there not] power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? 7 [Art] not thou our God, *the God of Israel,* [who] didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever*? 8 And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, 9 If [when] evil cometh upon us, [as] the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name [is] in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help; *pleading the solemn manner in which the temple was dedicated, and the promise God had made there,* (1 Kings viii. 37.) 10 And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldst not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; *he pleads their ingratitude, in coming up against Israel, who did not invade them when they were marching by their land;* 11 Behold, [I say, how] they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit; *it is rebelling against God, who they well knew had given them this land.* 12 O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes [are] upon thee; *he applies to the justice of God in their behalf, and enforces his prayer by an acknowledgment of their own weakness and perplexity*†. 13 And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children‡.

* Abraham was his friend; to him he gave the original grant, and promised the perpetuity of it, and these were his posterity.

† This may seem strange, when we compare chap. xvii. 14—16; but on a sudden invasion they could not gather so large an army together; perhaps they might have lost many in their expedition to Ramoth-gilead; or it may intimate their ignorance of the best means to help themselves, and therefore they fly to God.

‡ It was wise to bring their wives and little ones forth, to excite both compas-

14 Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation*; 15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle [is] not your's, but God's; *the cause is his, and he will succeed you.* 16 To-morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz, and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. 17 Ye shall not [need] to fight in this [battle;] set yourselves, stand ye [still,] and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them; for the LORD [will *certainly* be] with you; *he assures them of deliverance, but does not tell them by what means, repeating the encouragement, and inviting them to make an experiment of God's goodness and truth.* 18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with [his] face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD; *they did not ask a sign to confirm this, but, as it was an answer to prayer, they fully believed it.* 19 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high; *the Levites were so affected by this merciful declaration that they stood up and sung a hymn of triumph before the victory, and raised their voices that they might be the better heard, and express their full assurance of success.*

20 And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood *in the gate of the city,* and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper; *shall have present peace, be delivered from all uneasy apprehensions, and enjoy immediate prosperity.* 21 And when he had consulted with the people, *that is, the commanders and leaders,* he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy [endureth] for ever†.

sion and courage in the minds of the men; to make them more serious and fervent in prayer; and to move, as it were, the divine compassion in their favour.

* Perhaps he had never prophesied before, but the spirit then first came upon him; while they were praying God heard, and assured them of deliverance.

† They were to praise God in the same habit and in the same manner as they

22 And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten*. 23 For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy [them:] and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. 24 And when Judah came toward the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and behold they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped; *they found the greatest part of their enemies slain.* 25 And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much.

26 And on the fourth day, *when they had done gathering the spoils* they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; *on the spot of ground where the allies lay dead, they joined together, in a solemn manner, to praise the Lord,* for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, *that is, blessing,* unto this day. 27 Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. 28 And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD; *not content with what they had done in the valley, they renewed their praise at Jerusalem; appearing before God in a solemn manner in the temple. They did not go home to their families, or dispose of their booty, but came to the temple, where they probably offered many sacrifices.* 29 And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of [those] countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel; *they were all alarmed when they heard of such a victory, obtained without fighting, and in answer to their prayers.* 30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

did in the temple, which was called *the beauty of holiness*, being a beautiful and holy place. They probably repeated the 136th psalm, the Levites singing the first part of the verse, and all the people the chorus *for his mercy endureth for ever.* This was a noble procession, worthy a people who believed in God.

* They lay in ambush against Judah, but God confounded their minds, and they fell upon their own army; and the allies, suspecting treachery, fell upon one another; while the Israelites had nothing to do but to look on.

31 And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: [he was] thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 32 And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD. 33 Howbeit, the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers; *though they complied outwardly with some reformation, yet their hearts were not thoroughly purged from their idols.* 34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they [are] written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, who [is] mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.

35 And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly. 36 And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber; *this was wrong, and he was reproved for it.* 37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish; *Jehoshaphat repented, and broke off the alliance, as we read in* 1 Kings xxii. 49.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WHEN public dangers appear, it is a time for prayer. Jehoshaphat was alarmed at the tidings, and therefore proclaimed a fast. He lays in a stock of prayers from the first appearance of danger, and secures the help of heaven. Happy is it when good men and princes lead the way in such reasonable and beneficial services.

2. In prayer we should acknowledge the perfections and glory of God, and take encouragement from them. He hath almighty power and universal dominion. We should consider this to encourage our faith and hope.

3. We may recollect and plead former instances of the divine favour and goodness. So Jehoshaphat here, *v.* 7, 8., *Art not thou that God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land, before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend*

for ever, and they dwelt therein, and built thee a sanctuary for thy name? This shews care to observe former mercies, and gratitude for them, and strengthens our believing expectations of further deliverance.

4. Learn to plead the promises of God in prayer. His solemn declarations are designed to give us strong consolation. We should treasure them up in our minds, and urge and plead them at the throne of grace.

5. Let us be duly sensible of our own weakness, and humbly entreat strength of God against our spiritual enemies, against flesh and blood, satan, and the world. We have comparatively no might in ourselves; therefore let us direct our views to God and trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

6. Those who can speak sincerely to God in prayer may humbly hope he will direct his ministers to speak comfortably to them, *v.* 14., *Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, came the spirit of the Lord, in the midst of the congregation.* Then, immediately, while they were praying, the prophet is sent with good and comfortable tidings. If the faithful servants of God abound in fervent devotion, ministers have a commission to speak comfortably to them, and his Spirit shall make the consolation effectual.

7. It is good to praise God for the prospect of deliverance, and thank him for merciful declarations before they are accomplished. This testimony of our faith is pleasing to God, and brings the mind into a suitable frame to receive and improve the favours of heaven.

8. Faith, in God's promises, while we follow his directions, is the certain way to peace and establishment, and prosperity in both worlds. We have no extraordinary prophet now; but we have the revelation of prophets, apostles, and Christ; let us give credit to their messages, and be strong in the faith, so shall we prosper.

9. The divine goodness must be thankfully acknowledged in national deliverances. So it was here. And we should perpetuate the memory of these favours, that we may long value them, and render unto the Lord according to his benefits.

10. Those who have separated themselves from keeping bad company, should have nothing to do with them any more. Jehoshaphat had suffered by joining with Ahab. He lost his ships and men, and narrowly escaped with his life; but when Ahaziah

solicited him afterwards to join him, he would not. Thus let us say to every one that would tempt us to repeat our former sins, Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I am determined to serve the Lord.

CHAPTER XXI.

Contains the history of Jehoram, one of the vilest kings of Judah. There is some little confusion in the date of his reign, probably occasioned by his being viceroy to his father once or twice when he went from home.

1 NOW Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, (1 Kings xxii.), 50 And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. 2 And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah, all these [were] the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel, *or Judah, as the Seventy read it, and as it undoubtedly ought to be read; the other being a mistake of some transcriber.* 3 And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, *after the patriarchal manner,* with fenced cities in Judah; *at a distance from the capital, that they might give their brother no disturbance, and be secure from any sudden attack:* but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he [was] the first born. 4 Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword; *he founded his kingdom in blood, and slew all his brethren, not because they gave him any disturbance, but, as we read afterwards, because they were better than he, probably not joining in his idolatry;* and [divers] also of the princes of Israel; *some of those who came over from that kingdom, and were most zealous against corruptions in religion.*

5 Jehoram [was] thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab, *and worse he could not do:* for he had *Athaliah* the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought [that which was] evil in the eyes of the LORD, *and forsook the ways of his pious ancestors.* 7 Howbeit the LORD would not destroy the house of David, *would not*

cut off the succession till the Messiah came, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever; *to supply the lamp with fresh oil, that it should not go out,* 2 Sam. vii. 12., 1 Kings xi. 36.

8 In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king; *they had been subject to the Israelites since David's time, about one hundred and fifty years, and were used to have a viceroy sent them.* 9 Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots; *he gained a victory over the Edomites, but did not reduce them to subjection*.* 10 So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day, *and thus Isaac's prophecy, in* Genesis xxvii. 40., *was fulfilled.* The same time [also] did Libnah revolt from under his hand; because he had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers†. 11 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah [thereto;] *he set up idolatry, with impure and detestable rites in their worship. Jerusalem was easily brought into it by the influence of the king and the court; but it was more difficult to corrupt the country, they were the last that became degenerate, therefore he was obliged to use force with them.*

12 And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet‡, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah; *intimating that his degeneracy was aggravated by the piety of his ancestors, especially of his father and grandfather;* 13 But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house

* Others think the words are capable of being rendered thus, *the Edomites smote those who were about him,* that is, about Jehoram, and the captains of the chariots; and the people fled to their tents, that is, from whence they had made a sally in the night upon the Edomites, as it is in 2 Kings viii. 21.

† Libnah was a considerable city of the priests, on the frontiers of Judah, which revolted because he had set up idolatrous worship, contrary to the law of God. Thus he had work enough at home, and therefore could not recover his dominion over the Edomites.

‡ It is generally thought that Elijah was translated long before this; but foreseeing Jehoram's wickedness, he might leave this letter behind to be sent to him, that coming in this extraordinary way it might have the greater effect. Perhaps his insolence and cruelty were so great, as not to bear the reproof of a living prophet; though I rather think this might be before Elijah's translation, as the order of the story is not exactly observed.

of Ahab; *he had not only been an idolater himself, but compelled others to be so;* and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, [which were] better than thyself; *this was peculiarly heinous, as they were good men, far better than himself. These are the charges against him; then follows the sentence:* 14 Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: 15 And thou [shalt have] great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day; *almost every calamity that could be thought of should come upon him and on the people who complied with his idolatry; but the threatening had no effect.*

16 Moreover the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that [were] near the Ethiopians; *the Philistines invaded him on the west, and the Arabians and their neighbours on the south and on the east:* 17 And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; *the chief calamity fell upon him and upon his wives and children;* so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, *or Ahaziah,* the youngest of his sons, *who reigned after him, and one wife also, who was a great scourge to the nation afterwards; the other sons were all slain, as we find in the first verse of the next chapter, which was a just judgment upon him for slaying his brethren.*

18 And after all this, *which he had seen and felt,* the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. 19 And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers. 20 Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired; *they were glad he was dead, and they delivered from such a plague.* Howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings; *they showed even him some little respect.*

☞ After this, 2 Kings, chap. ix. may be read.

REFLECTIONS.

1. See the sad consequences of marrying a wicked person, and being allied to an irreligious family. The source of Jehoram's wickedness and misery was a bad wife, of Ahab's accursed race; who counselled him and her son after him to do wickedly. Great caution is required in making a settlement for life. Professors and profane uniting, was the ruin of the old world. Those that are ill-matched are half ruined; and no charms of person, wealth, or honour, will tempt any that are wise and thoughtful to run such a desperate risk.

2. The sins of the children of good parents are highly aggravated, and they expose themselves to severe condemnation. Observe how Jehoram is reminded of the piety of his good father and grandfather; and let children of good parents see in his misery the sad consequences of forsaking the God of their fathers, and despising their counsel. Such are, like Joram, generally the worst of men; worse than those who never enjoyed such advantages. Let young people, therefore, *know the God of their fathers; and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.*

3. What a spectacle of horror was this wicked prince in the last scenes of life! and what misery do men run themselves into by obstinate disobedience! To have the hand of God upon him in so awful a manner; a messenger sent from God to forwarn him of it, to let him know that he must die, and die in this dreadful manner; must surely occasion inexpressible terror and anguish. Yet, astonishing! we do not read of his repentance. Perhaps the torments of hell work upon him, and the other unhappy creatures who are there, just in the same manner. What distress must it have occasioned him, that his wives and children were taken from him, who might have been comforts to him, all but a young child; and a wicked, ill-natured, cruel wife was left to torment him. His substance gone, his kingdom divided; his people, some revolting, and all despising him; unable by reason of his disorder to do any thing towards recovering his substance or his kingdom. A more dreadful situation can scarcely be conceived. The instruction conveyed by it is, that we should *stand in awe and sin not*. To be sick, without substance, without friends, is bad enough; but to be sick and in sin, under the curse of God; to have no grace

to bear it, nor wisdom to improve it; to have no prospect, but *a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation,* Heb. x. 27., is a sad case indeed. This wicked prince was exhibited as a warning to all wicked men, what *a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!*

4. Wickedness will make the greatest of men mean and contemptible in the eyes of others; yea, those who have no religion themselves will despise them. The people wished him dead; were glad when he was gone; and he had not the customary honours of a king paid him at his funeral. Those who despise God shall be lightly esteemed. *When the righteous are in honour, the people rejoice; but when the wicked perish, there is shouting.*

CHAPTER XXII.

Ahaziah succeedeth Jehoram, and reigneth wickedly; he is slain by Jehu; Athaliah destroyeth all the royal seed, except Joash, and usurpeth the kingdom.

1 AND the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. 2 Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also [was] Athaliah the daughter of Omri. 3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. 4 Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction.

5 He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians smote Joram. 6 And he returned to be healed in Jezreel because of the wounds which were given him at Ramah, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab at Jezreel, because he was sick. 7 And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to

Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. 8 And it came to pass, that, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them. 9 And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him: Because, said they, he [is] the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom.

10 But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. 11 But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. 12 And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Jehoiada maketh Joash king; Athaliah is slain; and Jehoiada restoreth the worship of God.

1 AND in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. 2 And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. 3 And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David. 4 This [is] the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, [shall be] porters of the doors;

5 And a third part [shall be] at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people [shall be] in the courts of the house of the LORD. 6 But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they [are] holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the LORD. 7 And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever [else] cometh into the house, he shall be put to death: but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out. 8 So the Levites and all Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go [out] on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses. 9 Moreover Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears, and bucklers, and shields, that [had been] king David's, which [were] in the house of God. 10 And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple, to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about. 11 Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and [gave him] the testimony, and made him king: and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

12 Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD: 13 And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason. 14 Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priests said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD. 15 So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there.

16 And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD's people. 17 Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.

18 Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as [it is] written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, [as it was ordained] by David. 19 And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none [which was] unclean in any thing should enter in. 20 And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. 21 And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Joash, during the time of Jehoiada, reigns well, and repairs the temple; but afterwards apostatizes from God, and is slain.

1 JOASH [was] seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also [was] Zibeah of Beer-sheba. 2 And Joash did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest; *but he did not take away the high places,* 2 Kings xii. 3., *he durst not attempt that, (they were not taken away till the time of Hezekiah) though he sacrificed only to the true God.* 3 And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters; *he was directed in his choice by this good high priest.*

4 And it came to pass after this, [that] Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD; *which was gone to decay, having been neglected in the former reign, and out of gratitude to God for having been preserved there.* 5 And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter*. Howbeit the Levites hastened [it] not; *there was a*

* It is called, in 2 Kings xii. 4., *the money of the dedicated things*, what were, or should have been, devoted to God, besides the half shekel for all above twenty. Something

spirit of carelessness and indevotion among them; and we read elsewhere, that nothing was done for twenty-three years. The king therefore takes another method, and appoints other people. 6 And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, [according to the commandment] of Moses the servant of the LORD, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness? 7 For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God*; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim, *to adorn the temple and promote the worship of Baal.* 8 And at the king's commandment they made a chest, *with a slit in the top to put in money,* and set it without at the gate of the house of the LORD. 9 And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the LORD the collection [that] Moses the servant of God [laid] upon Israel in the wilderness, *for building the tabernacle.* 10 And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end, *till they had brought in enough, for they offered freely to this service.* 11 Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money; the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again; *this was done in the presence of the high priest's officer and the secretary of state, that there might be no fraud.* Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. 12 And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD. 13 So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it, *the work went on prosperously, the workmen were faithful,* 2 Kings xii. 15., *and the whole was speedily completed.* 14 And when they had finished [it,] they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD,

Something was due on both these accounts, (Lev. xxvii. 2.) He therefore sends to solicit the acquittance of these debts, year by year, that something might be done every year till the temple was quite repaired, and that it should be done immediately.

* These were probably by another husband, whom she intended to advance, and therefore slew the house of David.

[even] vessels to minister, and to offer [withal,] and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver; *nothing of this kind was done till the temple was put in repair, and then what remained was laid out in furniture and ornaments,* 2 Kings xii. 13. And they offered burnt-offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada; *the sacrifices and worship were constantly and regularly carried on.*

15 But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old [was he] when he died; *this was a great age, he remembered Solomon, and lived in eight kings' reigns.* 16 And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house, *repaired the temple and restored the worship.*

17 Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king; *they durst not come before, because they knew Jehoiada had great influence over him; but now they came with fine flattering speeches, complaining that Jerusalem was too far off, and desiring leave to worship Baal.* Then the king hearkened unto them. 18 And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols, *worshipped idols in the groves:* and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass *. 19 Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. 20 And the spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people: *when the king and the people were assembled upon some public occasion, he felt a divine motion to speak and reprove them,* and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. 21 And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD †. 22 Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which

* Hazael came up and took Gath, which belonged to Judah in David's time; after that he intended to have come up to Jerusalem, but Joash sent him the treasures of the temple and the king's house, and he went away for that time, 2 Kings xii. 17, 18.; but this had no effect, the people persisted in their idolatry, with the king at the head of them.

† This was an abominable crime, considering the person, the place, and the time it was done. They went after him into the court of the priests, where they were commanded not to enter, and slew him between the temple and the altar, see Matt. xxiii. 35. Barachiah was another name for Jehoiada, given him in honour, as the blessed of the Lord.

Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son; *this was horrible ingratitude; the son of him who saved his life, and the person who assisted to anoint and crown him.* And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon [it,] and require [it;] *the Lord will look upon it; it was a prophetic motion, and the judgment immediately followed.*

23 And it came to pass at the end of the year, [that] the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, *the princes who had flattered Joash and seduced him, and set up idolatry,* and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. 24 For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash. 25 And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases, *he was greatly wounded, and probably in great anguish of spirit,*) his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings, *because he had forsaken God and slain one of his prophets.* 26 And these are they that conspired against him; Zabad the son of Shimeath an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith a Moabitess. 27 Now [concerning] his sons, and the greatness of the burdens [laid] upon him, *the tribute of the Syrians, or the afflictions from the hand of God,* and the repairing of the house of God, behold they [are] written in the story of the book of the kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his stead *.

REFLECTIONS.

1. LEARN what an happiness it is for young men to have good guides, to teach them what is useful, especially that which is right in the sight of God. Joash was good while Jehoiada lived. Let young people value such, reckon their instruction a blessing, and not a burden; following them in all the important affairs of life is a mark of wisdom, not of weakness, especially in marriage, which is the most important. A child left to himself is generally

* After this chapter, 2 Kings, chap. xiii. may be read.

ruined. *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

2. How careful should aged saints be that they do not grow indolent, and cloud the honour of their useful days; *v.* 6., *And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah, and out of Jerusalem, the collection according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the Lord?* He was not sufficiently careful to quicken the priests and see them perform their work faithfully. This is the case with too many aged christians. Let us guard against it; be fruitful and active as long as we are able; and never indulge a slothful temper, but show our zeal for God; because the time is short, and our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

3. How amiable and lovely is a generous concern for the honour of God and the support of his house and worship! Princes and people cheerfully brought in supplies. The workmen were diligent and honest; all contributed their part. What a lovely sight! We should show such zeal ourselves; excite it in others, and stir up acquaintances to such labours of love.

4. How much is it to be wished that all who are employed in public affairs should show such integrity as these workmen did. They were so faithful that they never neglected their work; there was no occasion to examine their accounts. A good conscience is especially requisite in laying out public money, and the more so when the deceit is not likely to be known. Such persons are peculiarly criminal in the sight of God when dishonest and unfaithful. 'Those that think it no crime to cheat their king, the church, or their country, (as Mr. Henry observes,) will be of a different mind when God sets their sins in order before them.'

5. See how much the public often lose by the death of good men, though past the active scenes of life. Thus while Jehoiada lived he kept things in order, supported the worship of God, and prevented idolatry. Zeal and piety seemed to go with him. We should value such while they live, and lament them when they die. It is a peculiar honour to have done good to God and his house; and it is to be wished their spirit may remain with survivors, that instead of the fathers there may be the children to serve the Lord.

6. See the danger men, especially great men, are in from flatterers; *v.* 17., *After the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.* He had lost his counsellor. These men made a

fine speech, and he hearkened to them. Many young people are ruined by being told how clever and how wise they are. This encourages their folly, and teaches them to laugh at the counsel of their friends. A faithful regard to conscience and to the word of God would prevent such danger, for the word of God flatters no man.

7. God is a witness of our conduct, when those whom we reverenced are removed. Joash thought if Jehoiada was gone he might act as he would; but God knew him and sent prophets to reprove him. Let young people when their parents are dead, or when removed from under the eyes of their masters or parents, remember God knows the way they take; and however they may think to walk in the way of their hearts, and the sight of their eyes, yet know that for all these things God will bring them into judgment.

8. Reflect on the sad consequences of apostacy, and the miserable state of those whose heart is not right with God. Joash set out well, quickened the priests, was intent upon repairing the temple; but all this was by the force of education, or regard to the high priest, without any real principle. So far men often go; but the mask quickly drops, and like this unhappy prince, they form wicked alliances, and are undone. There are many, like him, who set out well; their friends have agreeable hopes; they begin in the spirit but end in the flesh. Such should remember God's judgment upon Joash; after all these pleasing prospects, he died miserable. Let those who forsake God after having known him, and for a while walked in his ways, remember their guilt is peculiarly aggravated, and their plagues shall be great and wonderful. Let all, especially those that are young, and are now hopeful, beware, lest they draw back to perdition. May they believe and persevere to the end, that they may be saved.

CHAPTER XXV.

The reign and death of Amaziah.

1 AMAZIAH, *the son of Joash,* [was] twenty and five years old [when] he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Jehoaddan of

Jerusalem. 2 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart, *not like king David, as it is expressed in* 2 Kings xiv. 13. 3 Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father; *as they were persons of considerable eminence at court, he durst not do it till he was settled.* 4 But he slew not their children; *this was commendable, notwithstanding there was danger of their raising a faction and revenging their father's death;* but [did] as [it is] written in the law in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.

5 Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of [their] fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin; *all of one family he put under the command of one of that family:* and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice [men, able] to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield; *they were sadly diminished since Jehoshaphat's time, when they were about four times that number.* 6 He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver. *This was wrong, because they were idolaters; God had determined that the kingdoms should be kept distinct, and had forbidden any alliance between them.* 7 But there came a man of God to him saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the LORD [is] not with Israel, [to wit, with] all the children of Ephraim, *because they are idolaters.* 8 But if thou wilt go, do [it,] be strong for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy; *thou shalt have no success, all shall be in vain:* for God hath power to help, and to cast down. 9 And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? *must I lose the money which is already paid?* And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this, *if thou wilt obey him and trust his goodness.* 10 Then Amaziah separated them, [to wit,] the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger, *resolving to be revenged for this insult.*

11 And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people *against the Edomites,* and went to the valley of salt, and smote of

the children of Seir ten thousand; *and, as we find in* 2 Kings xiv. 7., *he took Selah, or Petra, the capital of the country, the chief city of Arabia the stony.* 12 And [other] ten thousand [left] alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces*.

13 But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, *took the advantage of his army being gone against Edom, and* fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil, *which was a punishment to Amaziah for joining with those idolaters.*

14 Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, *which he ought to have burned,* and set them up [to be] his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them. 15 Wherefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand†? 16 And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that [the king] said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? *dost thou presume to give advice without a commission? not regarding the commission he had from God:* forbear; why shouldst thou be smitten‡? Then the prophet forbare, *he determined to say no more, but denounced sentence against him,* and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

17 Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face; *encouraged by his victory, and vexed at the injury the returning Israelites had done*

* This was barbarous treatment, but very common, especially among the Romans. We find, in 2 Kings, that he called the city Joktheel, or, *obedience to God*, because he thought this victory a reward for his obedience in sending back the hired Israelites.

† Had he thrown them from the rock instead of the soldiers, he would have shown a much more pious and compassionate spirit. Nothing more need be said to convince him of his stupidity. It was much wiser conduct in Fabius, the Roman governor, who, when he had taken Tarentum, and was asked what they must do with the gods? answered, Let them alone, they are good for nothing, since they could not defend their worshippers.

‡ He had probably here a reference to Zechariah, who was put to death in the former reign for his faithful reproof, chap. xxiv. 21.

him, ver. 13., *he sent him a challenge, and hoped now to reduce the kingdom of Israel to David's family again.* 18 And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, *in a most scornful and mortifying manner, by a parable,* The thistle that [was] in Lebanon sent to the cedar that [was] in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that [was] in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle; *a thistle, because it had drawn blood of some poor traveller, thought it might claim an alliance with the cedar, and was as goodly a tree as that; so, because Amaziah had beaten the Edomites, he thought he might conquer the Israelites; but Joash let him know that he and his men would tread him down, as easily as a wild beast does a thistle.* 19 Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites; and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldst thou meddle to [thine] hurt, that thou shouldst fall, [even] thou, and Judah with thee? *Be content with the victory already gained, and be quiet at home, or else it will end in thy ruin.* 20 But Amaziah would not hear; for it [came] of God, that he might deliver them into the hand [of their enemies,] because they sought after the gods of Edom. 21 So Joash the king of Israel went up; and they saw one another in the face, [both] he and Amaziah king of Judah, at Beth-shemesh, which [belongeth to Judah.] 22 And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to his tent. 23 And Joash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, *his own capital,* and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits; *that if they did not fulfil the condition he might the more easily chastise them.* 24 And [he took] all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, *that is, one of his posterity, to whom the care of them was committed,* and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, *the chief persons of the city,* and returned to Samaria; *he did not leave a garrison there, because he had work enough with the Syrians at home* *.

25 And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years. 26 Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, [are] they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? 27 Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following

* This is the desolation probably referred to in the first chapter of Isaiah's prophecy.

the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; *seeing the country spoiled, their city dismantled, their sons or relations carried away as hostages, and all this owing to his pride and rashness, they conspired against him;* and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there; *they sent a detachment of soldiers, and it seems to have been the act of all the people, who were vexed to suffer so much by his folly* *. 28 And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are taught hence, that it is not sufficient to act in religion, as our forefathers have, unless our hearts are right with God. Amaziah did what was right in itself, but not like David. It is not sufficient to worship in the same place with our fathers; to adhere to the interest they promoted, without their integrity and zeal. Unless the heart is right, all is vain and hypocritical.

2. The all-sufficiency of God should encourage us, whatever we may lose for a good conscience; *v.* 9., *And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.* This is a very common objection in quarrels about money matters; we are loth to yield; to give up sinful branches of trade which are profitable; or to leave off selling on the Lord's day. We are ready to ask, What shall we do for the money? But it is below a good man to ask such a question, in cases where duty and conscience are concerned. The belief of God's all-sufficiency is an answer to a thousand such trifling objections. He can make up every loss. Let us often think of this when we are called upon to part with any thing for God and religion. So Paul urges to charity, *God is able to make all grace abound to you.*

3. See the miserable condition of that man to whom the word of the Lord is a burden and reproach: *v.* 16., *Then the prophet said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my counsel.* Young and headstrong people are willing that ministers should always prophesy smooth things. They are angry at them, and at parents and friends, because they reprove and admonish them; and are

* See 2 Kings xiv. 23., to the end, which should be read in this connexion.

glad when they give over. But that is a sign of impending ruin. We may certainly say in such a case, *I know God is determined to destroy thee;* for the word of God declares, *he that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* Prov. xxix. 1.

4. *Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.* Amaziah, hot-headed and flushed with victory, would defy the hosts of Israel; and this was *because his heart was lifted up.* This is the cause of many disorders. It is not men's substance, their honours, or their victories, which do them mischief, but their pride; *their hearts are lifted up.* Proud men, upon every little success or gain, think themselves superior to every body, and fit for any thing. But they often, as it is here said, *meddle to their hurt.* He that is eager to fight, or go to law, may quickly have enough of it. It is better, as Joash advised Amaziah, *to tarry at home;* to be quiet, contented, and thankful. *The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water;* Prov. xvii. 14. The story we have been considering confirms the usefulness of Solomon's advice, *Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour has put thee to shame;* Prov. xxv. 8.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Uzziah succeeds Amaziah; for invading the priest's office, he is smitten with leprosy; he dies, and is succeeded by Jotham.

1 THEN all the people of Judah took Uzziah *, who [was] sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah †. 2 He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that king slept with his fathers. 3 Sixteen years old [was] Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem, *the longest of any king of Judah or Israel.* His mother's name also [was] Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 4 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, according to all

* He is called Azariah, in 2 Kings xv. 1. Both are words of the same signification, *God is my help.*

† There was an interregnum of twelve years. It is probable that his father died when he was about four years old, and twelve years after that the people made him king in the room of his father.

that his father Amaziah did, *but did not take away the high places.* 5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, *(probably the son of Zechariah whom his grandfather slew),* who had understanding in the visions of God, *expounded the scriptures, and instructed the people out of them:* and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper. 6 And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines; *that is, garrisons to keep them in subjection.* 7 And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-Baal, and the Mehunims, *a wild people, who lived by robbery and plunder, in part of Arabia.* 8 And the Ammonites gave gifts, *or presents,* to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad [even] to the entering in of Egypt: for he strengthened [himself] exceedingly.

9 Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning [of the wall,] and fortified them; *he rebuilt the wall that was demolished in his father's time by the king of Israel, and built towers to defend it.* 10 Also he built towers in the desert, *or rather, places of security for his husbandmen and shepherds, and shelters for his cattle and granaries,* and digged many wells, for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen [also,] and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel*: for he loved husbandry, *and set his subjects an example of diligence in agriculture.*

11 Moreover Uzziah had an host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, *light troops to secure the nation from inroads,* according to the number of their account by the hand of Jeiel the scribe, *or secretary of war,* and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hananiah, [one] of the king's captains. 12 The whole number of the chief of the fathers, *or officers,* of the mighty men of valour [were] two thousand and six hundred. 13 And under their hand [was] an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. 14 And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings [to cast] stones, *weapons both offensive and defensive.* 15 And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, *such as the ancients used before guns were invented,* to be upon the towers and upon the bulwarks, to

* This was not mount Carmel in Samaria, but a fruitful country in Judea, often mentioned by the prophets.

shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. *Thus whether in peace or war, he arrived at the greatest glory.*

16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to [his] destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense*. 17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, [that were] valiant men: 18 And they withstood Uzziah the king; *probably surrounded the altar of incense, that he might not approach it without offering violence to them,* and said unto him, *boldly, yet respectfully,* [It appertaineth] not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; *thou hast gone too far already in coming into the sanctuary;* neither [shall it be] for thine honour from the LORD God; *meaning it would be a disgrace and reproach to him; but they spoke modestly and respectfully, as to their king.* 19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and [had] a censer in his hand to burn incense; *he still persisted in his design:* and while he was wroth with the priests, *and probably threatening them,* the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar; *the leprosy plainly appeared to the priests, as he stood before the altar of incense.* 20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he [was] leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him†. 21 And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, [being] a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD‡: and Jotham his son [was] over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

* This was strange conduct. Had he prayed before the people, had he preached to them, as David and Solomon and Jehoshaphat did, it would have been well; but his burning incense upon the altar was an high insult to God and his sanctuary. It is hard to assign any reason for it. Perhaps he wanted to be like the heathen princes; or to imitate his father, who burnt incense before the gods of Edom; or Jeroboam, who did so before his calves.

† They were going to thrust him out, but he went out himself, for fear of some greater judgment. This was a very remarkable punishment. He aspired at honour, and was smitten with a loathsome disease. He invaded the priests' office, and was angry with them, and now was smitten with a disease which was subject to their inspection For coming into the sanctuary, he was expelled the outer court, where the meanest subject might enter. By aspiring to the priestly office, he lost the royal dignity.

‡ God might justly punish him, as he was guilty of an high affront to him and his

22 Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write, *but this account is lost. His name is mentioned in* Isaiah vi. 1. 23 So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which [belonged] to the kings; for they said, He [is] a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We infer, that true religion, or *seeking the Lord,* is the way to prosperity, *v.* 5. As long as Uzziah did so, *God made him to prosper exceedingly.* All prosperity comes from God, and is most likely to be found in the ways of piety. Whatever was peculiar to that dispensation, still it is to be remembered, that *godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

2. How hard is it to bear prosperity with moderation and thankfulness! Uzziah is a dreadful instance of this; *v.* 16., *When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord, and burned incense upon the altar of incense.* He had led large forces against his enemies, and mightily subdued them; but pride subdued him. Good men as well as great men are in danger of this. We need to watch our hearts against the encroachment of so dangerous a foe; and to pray, that we enter not into so common and hurtful a temptation.

3. Learn how jealous God is for the purity of his own institutions and the order of his house, who made this great and glorious, and in other respects, good king, so awful a monument of his displeasure. We have no such particular laws now; but the reason of the thing and the rule of the gospel require men to keep within their own sphere and calling; and especially not to invade the ministerial office: it is pride and ignorance which embolden men sometimes to do it. But *it is not for their honour before the Lord God,* nor for the honour of their ministry. Let every man be a preacher in his own family, and do all the good he can to the souls of his neighbours. This is every man's business; and

law; and to prevent the royal and priestly dignity from being confounded, on the keeping of which separate, much of the Jewish economy depended. He lived long a monument of God's displeasure; which must be peculiarly mortifying to so active a prince, and such a lover of business, and in the height of all his glory.

if they would discharge that, and ministers at the same time give themselves wholly to their office, without meddling with secular affairs, the world and church would be more orderly, virtuous, and happy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The reign of Jotham. In 2 Kings xv. 8., to the end, is an account of several kings of Israel during the reign of Azariah or Uzziah over Judah. It will be proper to read it here, and then return to this account of his son.

1 JOTHAM [was] twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also [was] Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok. 2 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did; *he seems to have been a good king; no evil is said of him; he imitated his father in what was commendable:* howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly; *rather, surely he entered not into the temple of the Lord in the profane manner his father did: yet the people did corruptly, by sacrificing and burning incense in high places.* 3 He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, *where the Nethinims dwelt,* Neh. iii. 26., and on the wall of Ophel he built much*. 4 Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

5 He fought also with the kings of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them: *they had not revolted before since David's time, and now became tributaries.* And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year, and the third. 6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God, *directed all his counsels and actions by God's word*†.

7 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they [are] written in the book of the kings of Israel

* Ophel was a large tower, that probably afterwards was called the tower of Anthony.

† 2 Kings, chap. xvi. should be read next.

and Judah. 8 He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. 9 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We have just reason for thankfulness that our land is not like that of Israel. *For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof;* Prov. xxviii. 2. They had many in a few years; attended with riots, murders, anarchy, and confusion. Alas, what peace and comfort could the subject have amidst such scenes as these! Let us bless God this is not the case in our days. We should often make this reflection, when we read such stories in sacred or common history; and it is a reflection which should be made with much seriousness and gratitude.

2. However men act, the word of God shall take effect. God had said, *Thy sons shall sit on the throne unto the fourth generation,* 2 Kings xv. 12., and so it came to pass. All Jehu's descendants were wicked; but God's promises notwithstanding were accomplished. What an encouragement is this to good men, to be *strong in faith, giving glory to God. Faithful is He who hath promised, and who also is able to perform;* and if he keeps his word with his enemies, much more will he do it with his friends.

3. We must imitate the best of men no further than they behave well. Where we have a particular veneration for persons, we are in danger of running into their errors and follies. Caution on this head is proper. Let us do as our fathers did, so far as it was good and commendable. But the chief thing is to follow the rules of God's word; and like Jotham, *prepare our ways before the Lord*; then shall we become mighty, honourable, and happy.

4. The greatest princes are only God's instruments, and execute his purposes. The Assyrians were only the rod of his anger, 2 Kings xv. 29. He gives them their commission, and sends them against ungrateful and sinful men. Let us reverence his providence; adore his influence over the spirits of men; and remember, that *the hearts of all men are in the hand of the Lord. Happy are the people who have him for their friend.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ahaz reigns wickedly; is afflicted by the Syrians; his death; and is succeeded by Hezekiah.

1 AHAZ [was] twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: 2 For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. 3 Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. 4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree*. 5 Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives and brought [them] to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter. 6 For Pekah the son of Remaliah *made a prodigious slaughter, and* slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, [which were] all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. 7 And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, *the high steward of the household,* and Elkanah [that was] next to the king, *the king's chief favourite.*

8 And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. 9 But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name [was] Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage [that] reacheth up unto heaven. 10 And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you; *either to keep them for slaves, or to sell them to other coun-*

* The following verses, from the fifth to the twenty-first, should be read in connexion with 2 Kings, chap. xvi, and between the sixth and seventh verses.

tries, contrary to the law of God: [but are there] not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God? *for which, if God were strict to mark, you would be punished worse than they, and therefore you ought to show mercy to them.* 11 Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD [is] upon you. 12 Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son ot Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war, *and showed a noble spirit, insisting on the prophet's order to deliver up the captives being executed:* 13 And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD [already,] ye intend to add [more] to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and [there is] fierce wrath against Israel. 14 So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation, *to do with them as they pleased.* 15 And the men which were expressed by name, *which were nominated by the congregation,* rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, *dressed their wounds,* and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren; *provided beasts for the feeble, and brought them safe to the land of Judah:* then they returned to Samaria.

16 At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. 17 For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives; *they took advantage of these troubles and confusions to attack him.* 18 The Philistines also, *to revenge the injuries that Uzziah his grandfather had done them,* had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. 19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel*; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD; *he deprived them of the divine protection by his idolatry and wickedness.* 20 And Tilgath-pilnezer king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but

* It should be *king of Judah,* as the Seventy and the old translation read it. It is evidently a mistake in the transcribing.

strengthened him not. 21 For Ahaz took away a portion [out] of the house of the LORD, and [out] of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave [it] unto the king of Assyria; *he got all the treasures he could together, to bribe the king of Assyria to help him;* but he helped him not*.

22 And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this [is that] king Ahaz. 23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, [therefore] will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. 24 And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. 25 And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

26 Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they [are] written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 27 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, [even] in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The good reign of Hezekiah; the true religion is restored, and the house of God cleansed.

1 HEZEKIAH began to reign [when he was] five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. 2 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD according to all that David his father had done.

3 He in the first year of his reign in the first month, *resolutely began a reformation, and* opened the doors of the house of the LORD, *which his father had shut,* and repaired them. 4 And

* See a larger account of this in 2 Kings xvi. 7—9., which it will be proper to read in connexion with this.

he brought in the priests and the Levites, *which his father had excluded,* and gathered them together into the east street, *before the east gate, at the entrance of the temple,* 5 And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy [place;] *carry the altar of Ahaz out of the court.* 6 For our fathers have trespassed, *(he speaks tenderly concerning his own father,)* and done [that which was] evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, *that is, his worship,* and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned [their] backs, *that is, worshipped towards the east, contrary to the law, which required them to worship towards the most holy place, which lay west of the court.* 7 Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense, nor offered burnt offerings in the holy [place] unto the God of Israel. 8 Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, *when Pekah slew an hundred and twenty thousand of them in one day, (see* ch. xxviii. 6.), and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. 9 For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives [are] in captivity for this; *some were slain, and others carried captive.* 10 Now [it is] in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. 11 My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense; *see that God's laws are observed, and the order of his house restored, now you have liberty to do so.*

12 Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of Merari; Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and of the Gershonites; Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah: 13 And of the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of Asaph; Zechariah, and Mattaniah: 14 And of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of Jeduthun; Shemaiah, and Uzziel. *These are the names of the principal persons who complied with the king's order, and stirred up their brethren to the work.* 15 And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, *by washing the body and observing other rites of the law,* and came according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse

the house of the LORD. 16 And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse [it,] and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took [it,] to carry [it] out abroad into the brook Kidron. 17 Now they began on the first [day] of the first month to sanctify; *washing every part, cleaning the candlesticks and vessels, which were grown rusty, and repairing the decayed parts;* and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end; *being eight days more in cleaning the courts, and chambers, and offices about it.* 18 Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shew bread table, with all the vessels thereof. 19 Moreover all the vessels which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they [are] before the altar of the LORD.

20 Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. 21 And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he-goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer [them] on the altar of the LORD*. 22 So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled [it] on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar; *all this was according to the law.* 23 And they brought forth the he-goats [for] the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them: 24 And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded [that] the burnt offering and the sin offering [should be made] for all Israel, *hereby acknowledging their relation to them.* 25 And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for [so was] the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. And the

* Atonement was first made for past sins. The law appointed only one of each as a sin offering; but as their guilt had been heinous, Hezekiah ordered seven, or one seven times over.

Levites stood with the instruments of David, *which David had appointed,* and the priests with the trumpets, *which Moses ordered.* 26 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD* began [also] with the trumpets, and with the instruments [ordained] by David king of Israel. 28 And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: [and] all [this continued] until the burnt offering was finished. 29 And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped; *they began and concluded the service with a solemn adoration of the divine majesty.* 30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, *not only this day, but continually.* And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped. 31 Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD†. And the congregation brought in sacrifices, and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings‡. 32 And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, [and] two hundred lambs: all these [were] for a burnt offering to the LORD. 33 And the consecrated things, *all the offerings consecrated to God, besides the burnt offerings already mentioned,* [were] six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep. 34 But the priests, *that is, such as were sanctified,* were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them till the work was ended, and until the [other] priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites [were] more upright in heart to sanctify themselves, *had greater zeal and resolution,* than the priests. 35 And also the burnt offerings [were] in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for [every] burnt offering. *This was another reason why the priests were too few;*

* Probably *the song of the Lord* was the hundred and thirty-sixth psalm, which seems to have been used in the daily worship.

† Atonement being thus made, and the regular worship established, he commanded that other sacrifices should be brought. Having consecrated themselves, by offering sacrifices of reconciliation, they were to bring peace offerings as an acknowledgment of God's goodness.

‡ This showed great piety and zeal, because the whole of the burnt offerings were destroyed, but the peace offerings were shared by them and the priests.

the fat of the peace offerings was to be burnt, and drink offerings were presented with each burnt offering. So the service of the house of the LORD, *both ordinary and extraordinary,* was set in order. 36 And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was [done] suddenly; *to see all so ready and so resolute, manifested a divine influence on their minds, which occasioned great joy.*

☞ For the Reflections on this chapter, see 2 Kings, chap. xviii.

CHAPTER XXX.

The passover being agreed upon, letters are sent by Hezekiah to invite all Israel to it; We have here the manner in which it was kept, and the feast which followed it.

1 AND Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, *those of the ten tribes of Israel that were not carried captive,* and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh *, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel. 2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. 3 For they could not keep it at that time, *that is, on the fourteenth day of the first month, as the law directed, for the temple was not cleansed till the sixteenth; and* because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. 4 And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation; *the advice of the council was approved, and the thing agreed upon* †. 5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done [it] of a long [time in such sort] as it was written. 6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the command-

* Ephraim and Manasseh are particularly mentioned, because they were near Judah, and might know more of religion by an intercourse with their neighbours. They were invited to come to Jerusalem, because that was the only place where it could be kept.

† The ten tribes had not kept it since their separation, being hindered from going to Jerusalem: and Judah never kept it with such solemnity as they did now, since the time of Solomon.

ment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, [who] therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. 8 Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers [were, but] yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. 9 For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children [shall find] compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God [is] gracious and merciful, and will not turn away [his] face from you, if ye return unto him*. 10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulon: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. *The message was generally slighted; they knew so little of Jehovah, and were so used to other gods, that their hearts were hardened.* 11 Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. 12 Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD. *Judah was unanimous, and it is mentioned as the work of God.*

13 And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation. 14 And they arose and took away the altars that [were] in Jerusalem, and all the altars for the incense took they away, and cast [them] into the brook Kidron. *They began by showing their zeal against idolatry.* 15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth [day] of the second month: and the priests and the Levites, *who had not sanctified themselves before,* were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the LORD. *They were ashamed at seeing the people so forward, and themselves so cold and negligent.* 16 And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law

* This was the pious and affectionate letter which he sent, in which he exhorts them to turn again and yield themselves to God, and enter his sanctuary at Jerusalem; and not be like their fathers who were given up to idolatry: and the reasons he urges are, that they were the children of Israel; that Jehovah was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; that he would be merciful to them, and save them from ruin, and bring back their brethren. This the law of Moses declared; and Hezekiah, no doubt, had authority to urge it in this case, as a motive to their repentance.

of Moses the man of God, *that they might despatch the business the more readily:* the priests sprinkled the blood, [which they received] of the hand of the Levites. 17 For [there were] many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers *(the paschal lamb and other sacrifices belonging to that feast, and more than usual were now necessary)* for every one [that was] not clean, to sanctify [them] unto the LORD. 18 For a multitude of the people, [even] many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. *Having a pious desire to eat it, they were allowed to do so, lest they should be discouraged, and the growing reformation be prevented, in humble confidence that God would not punish this neglect, when the heart was honest and upright.* But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one 19 [That] prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, *that cometh with pure and holy intentions,* though [he be] not [cleansed] according to the purification of the sanctuary. 20 And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people*. 21 And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, [singing] with loud instruments unto the LORD. 22 And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD, *that read and expounded the law to the people,* and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace-offerings, and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers. *This was necessary, considering the idolatry of Israel, and of the last reign in Judah. Hezekiah commended their care and diligence, and promised to reward their zeal in propagating the true religion, as we find in the next chapter.* 23 And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days, *though it was the time of harvest:* and they kept [other] seven days with gladness; *with sacrifices, prayer, praises, &c.* 24 For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. *Hezekiah entertained his subjects and the Israelites, and there came*

* Some have supposed that God had inflicted some disease upon them; others that he now pardoned them, and gave them some tokens of his acceptance: probably fire from heaven, that had gone out in the time of Ahaz.

in a sufficient number of priests to offer the sacrifices, and sprinkle the blood. 25 And all the congregation of Judah with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced*. 26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel [there was] not the like in Jerusalem.

27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people *according to the law, that is, prayed that God would bless them:* and their voice was heard, and their prayer came [up] to his holy dwelling place, [even] unto heaven. *He answered their prayer, and ratified the blessing they pronounced.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. It is the duty of those who have revolted from God to turn again to him, to devote themselves to his service, and enter into strict engagements to be his. This is the way to escape the misery which impenitent sinners fall into, and secure God's favour. He never turns his face away from those that seek him: *Return unto me, and I will return unto thee, saith the Lord.*

2. It is no new thing for messengers who come on the most important concerns, and in the most friendly way, to be despised and scorned. One would have thought the Israelites should at least have given Hezekiah's messengers a civil reception: but they mocked them, and laughed them to scorn. So the gospel of reconciliation is often treated; and the kind invitations of the King of heaven despised. But the consequences will be dreadful; *such despisers shall wonder, and perish.*

3. It is a great satisfaction to reflect, that while many reject the gospel offers, some embrace them. As the gospel will be to many *a savour of death,* it is pleasant to think, that to some it will be *a savour of life.* This gives encouragement to ministers and good men; and the hand of God should be acknowledged in it.

4. The zeal and piety of others should shame us out of our sloth and negligence; v. 15., *And the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves.* God continues in every age some examples of eminent piety, to quicken our zeal. When we

* These strangers from Israel became proselytes, and dwelt in Judah, and thus escaped that utter destruction which quickly after was brought on their country by the Assyrians; when those who mocked Hezekiah's messengers were carried away.

see others eager and forward in religion, instead of censuring their conduct, and imputing bad designs to them, let us rather imitate their zeal. Ministers especially, when they see private christians zealous, should be ashamed to be less so. May we all by our good example *provoke one another to love and good works.*

5. Hezekiah's prayer for the people may properly be adopted by us in our approaches to God. The great thing is to prepare the heart to seek God: to have a sincere mind, and a fixed intention to serve him: there may be defects in our wandering thoughts, in the frame of our spirits; when they are not such as we could wish, in such cases, we may go to God by prayer, entreat him to pardon us, and accept our sincere endeavours through Christ, notwithstanding these unallowed imperfections. *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need;* Heb. iv. 16.

6. Religious services ought always to be attended with joy. This is often repeated, *They kept the feast with gladness, and rejoiced with great joy.* All religious duties should be performed with pleasure; we should come to them with delight; endeavour to keep our hearts cheerful. *Pray without ceasing, and rejoice evermore.*

7. The blessing which God's ministers pronounce, if attended to with sincerity and devotion, will be acceptable to him, and be confirmed by him; *v.* 27. It is not an empty or insignificant form; if we sincerely join in it, and humbly desire a blessing, our prayers will be granted, and the blessing ratified. Let us then heartily join in such a solemn act, for in God's house he *commands a blessing, even life for evermore.*

CHAPTER XXXI.

The zeal of the people in destroying idolatry; the provision made for supplying God's table and his priests; and Hezekiah's integrity and success in all.

1 NOW when all this was finished, *after the celebration of the passover, and the good instructions they had received,* all Israel that were present, went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the

high places, and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities.

2 And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, *which David had instituted, and the daily worship;* every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD, *that is, in the gates of his house, about which the Levites were encamped, and kept their proper stations.* 3 [He appointed] also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, [to wit,] for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as [it is] written in the law of the LORD*. 4 Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD; *that being maintained, they might be encouraged in the discharge of their duty.*

5 And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance of the first fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all [things] brought they in abundantly. 6 And [concerning] the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen, and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated† unto the LORD their God, and laid [them] by heaps. 7 In the third month, *at the beginning of harvest,* they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished [them] in the seventh month, *at the end of harvest.* 8 And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel. *They blessed God for this plenty, who had given the people a heart to contribute; and commended the people's generosity and piety, and prayed God to bless them.* 9 Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps; *how there came to be so much left.* 10 And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since [the people]

* This was appointed to be furnished out of the common stock; but as the people were poor, Hezekiah contributed to it out of his own revenue: he set a good example, that he might thereby quicken others.

† By consecrated things is meant, their vows, or voluntary dedications, the gains of trade, or the spoils of war.

began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left [is] this great store, *laid up for winter.*

11 Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD, *for storehouses;* and they prepared [them,] 12 And brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated [things] faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite [was] ruler, and Shimei his brother [was] the next. 13 And Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, [were] overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God. 14 And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, [was] over the free-will offerings of God to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things; *to give out the proper sacrifices, and what belonged to them, as oil, flour, salt, wine and incense, &c.* 15 And next him [were] Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in [their] set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small; *as the former were to distribute portions to the priests in waiting, these were to take care of those who were at home in their cities.* 16 Besides their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, [even] unto every one that entereth into the house of the LORD, his daily portion for their service in their charges according to their courses *. 17 Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses †; 18 And to the genealogy of all their little ones, *under three years old, of which there was an exact register kept,* their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness; *in great fidelity consecrated themselves to serve an holy God in his holy place* ‡. 19 Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, [which were]

* The male children of the Levites, above three years old, were allowed to come to the temple with their fathers, and share in the distribution. In their time of waiting they brought their families with them.

† In the law it was from thirty years old; but David altered this, probably by divine appointment, as the numbers of the people and the proselytes increased. 1 Chron. xxiii. 26.

‡ This is given as a reason why such care was taken of their families, because they were either employed in the temple, or in teaching the people at home; and would otherwise have been unable to provide for them.

in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites; *those who were not in waiting, but at home in their city, were also provided for.*

20 And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought [that which was] good and right and truth before the LORD his God; *what was pleasing to God, agreeable to the rules of equity and the divine law, and profitable to the people.* 21 And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did [it] with all his heart, and prospered. *Whatever he undertook for the advancement of religion, or the good government of the nation, he did it uprightly and vigorously, and God prospered him in it* *.

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE good effects of ordinances should be shown after they are finished. When the people had received good instructions, and attended the solemn festivals, then they began the work of reformation. We are not to think all is over when the sabbath is done; or that it is sufficient to have performed the public duties of it; for then the hardest work begins; to cherish good impressions, and put in practice the good instructions we have received. *Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.*

2. The pleasures of religious ordinances should lead us to hate sin, and fill us with holy zeal against every thing that may be displeasing and offensive to God; with zeal against all kinds of idolatry, till we have utterly destroyed them, and left none standing, however ancient or respectable. Thus sermons, and especially the christian passover, should be improved to kindle zeal against sin, and make all who attend it cry out, *What have I to do any more with idols?*

3. It is a natural inference from this chapter, that where there is a love to God and his house, and a concern for the interest of religion, there will be a care for the comfortable maintenance of

* One circumstance of Hezekiah's wisdom and piety is not mentioned here, but may be inferred from Prov. xxv. 1., that he employed some skilful scribe to compare and write out copies of the law and other sacred writings; and also smaller collections of proverbs, which were scattered abroad in several hands. These he employed some priests or prophets to copy, and publish for the good of his kingdom.

ministers. Hezekiah was solicitous not only to have them maintained, but also encouraged in the work of God; *v.* 4., *He commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord;* that they might be kept free from care and distraction, and encouraged in their work, by the generosity of the people. That their families, by being comfortably and creditably supported, should be an honour to their people, as well as make them go on cheerfully in their work. Those who experience the benefit and comfort of a good ministry, will never grudge the expense of it.

4. The way to secure the blessing of God, is to do that which is right, and to do it uprightly; *v.* 20, 21., *And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.* Whatever is agreeable to the nature and will of God, should be done vigorously, and with resolution; with a sincere intention to please God, to profit men, and save ourselves: this will be to our own honour and comfort. The apostle Paul's rule is applicable to every circumstance in life, *Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.* Col. iii. 23, 24.

CHAPTER XXXII.

An account of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah, and his defeat; his treachery and renewed attempt on the city; Hezekiah's sickness, and recovery; who, dying, is succeeded by Manasseh.

1 AFTER these things, and the establishment thereof, *the settlement of all things about the worship of God,* Sennacherib king of Assyria, *son of Shalmaneser who carried the ten tribes captive, (called, in* Isa. xx. 1., *Sargon,)* came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself, *or, to break them up.* 2 And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against

Jerusalem, 3 He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which [were] without the city, *that they might be of no service to the enemy, and had them conveyed by pipes under ground to the city:* and they did help him. 4 So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria, *that is, the king of Assyria and his allies,* come, and find much water? 5 Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised [it] up to the towers, and another wall without, *to strengthen the old one,* and repaired Millo [in] the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance. 6 And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, *encouraged them to stand by him in defence of their city, religion, and liberties,* saying, 7 Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that [is] with him: for [there be] more with us than with him: 8 With him [is] an arm of flesh; but with us [is] the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles; *we have a good cause, and a good God to depend upon.* And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah; *encouraged themselves by what he said. Sennacherib, hearing of these preparations, was willing to accept of Hezekiah's terms**.

9 After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem, (but he [himself laid siege] against Lachish, and all his power with him,) unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that [were] at Jerusalem, saying, 10 Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem? 11 Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, the LORD our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 12 Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it? 13 Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of [other] lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand? 14 Who [was there] among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine

* Here it will be proper to read 2 Kings, chap. xviii. 13, 14, &c.

hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand? 15 Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand? 16 And his servants spake yet [more] against the LORD God, and against his servant Hezekiah. 17 He wrote also letters to rail on the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of [other] lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand. 18 Then they cried with a loud voice in the Jews' speech unto the people of Jerusalem that [were] on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them; that they might take the city. 19 And they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, [which were] the work of the hands of men.

20 And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven. 21 And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword. 22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all [other,] and guided them on every side. 23 And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

24 In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. 25 But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit [done] unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. 26 Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, [both] he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *for all were lifted up on account of their deliverance, of the compliment from Babylon, and the buildings done by Hezekiah; but they humbled themselves,* so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

27 And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour:

and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; 28 Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. 29 Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much. 30 This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. *He brought water under the ground into the city before the Assyrians came, which was an admirable contrivance.* And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

31 Howbeit in [the business of] the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was [done] in the land*, God left him, to try him, that he might know all [that was] in his heart. *Vanity was Hezekiah's predominant passion; and God left him, that Hezekiah himself might know what was in his heart. God took this method to make him sensible of it, and to cure it.*

32 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they [are] written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, [and] in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 33 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David†: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death; *lamenting the loss of so excellent a prince, and such a friend to Israel.* And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

REFLECTIONS.

1. In the instance here related, we see that a reformed nation may meet with troubles and calamities. Hezekiah and his people were engaged in a good work, and had reformed much; but many did not like it. They were an hypocritical nation; and God brought this evil upon them to quicken them, and to put life into this good work. We should expect trouble, and prepare for it; and make that use of afflictions which God intends; to quicken us to greater zeal and activity in that which is good.

* Whether this refers to Sennacherib's destruction, or to the miracles in Hezekiah's favour, is uncertain.

† This burying-place still continues; and is the only remains of the old Jerusalem now to be found.

2. Trust in God should always be accompanied with the use of proper means for our deliverance: so Hezekiah did. He fortified the city, and made weapons offensive and defensive. To trust in God without the use of proper means, is to tempt him. Prudence, valour, and piety, should always go together; and then they constitute the hero.

3. A believing confidence in God, is the best remedy against the fear of man. Hezekiah exhorted the people to be strong and courageous: and why? because God was for them. Our enemies endeavour to frighten us from this, because it is our best security; but let us resist such temptations, *and have our hearts fixed, trusting in the Lord.* The fear of our Maker will prevent the fear of the fury of the oppressor. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*

4. In Rab-shakeh we may see a specimen of great pride and insolence. He talks big, and blusters, and seems very desirous that all should know who he is, and what a great king his master is. Thus do proud men magnify themselves, and their own strength, courage, and success, and speak contemptibly of every body else. Hezekiah's messengers spoke very respectfully to this wretch; and he answered them with foul language. Herein he is like proud men in general; to reason with them, and speak them fair, only makes them more unreasonable and tumultuous. But, as in this case, *pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

5. Those who persecute God's church and people often pretend commission from him for so doing. Rab-shakeh used a boasting lie when he said, *The Lord hath sent me.* So men think they act by commission from him, and are doing him good service, when they are opposing his interests, persecuting his servants, casting them out, and saying, *Let the Lord be magnified.*

6. We are here taught *not to answer a fool according to his folly, lest we should be like him.* Hezekiah's advice was wise and prudent, *answer not a word;* it will only provoke him the more, and give him pretence for the attack; or grieve the people, and dishearten them by his further rage and blasphemy. When at any time we have to do with proud and domineering men, silence is best; *not rendering railing for railing.* To exhort them, is to cast pearls before swine. Herein *wisdom is profitable to direct. There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence.* But it is always prudent to keep silence when pride and passion have got the better of reason and common sense.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The wicked reign of Manasseh, who is carried to Babylon bound in fetters; upon his earnest entreaty he is released, and reforms; Amon succeeds him, and is slain by his own servants.

1 MANASSEH [was] twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: 2 But did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. 3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4 Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: 8 Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. 9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, [and] to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

10 And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken*. 11 Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, *(Esarhaddon, who had lately conquered Babylon, and to secure his con-*

* We have seen, in 2 Kings xxi., Manasseh's wickedness, and the judgments that were threatened for it; here we see the execution of them; in which God intended at once to make him a monument of his justice and his grace.

quest, had fixed his royal seat there), which took Manasseh among the thorns, *in a thicket where he had hid himself*, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. 12 And when he was in affliction he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, 13 And prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. *God touched the emperor's heart, and he released him.* Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he [was] God. *He was convinced of his power, wisdom, and goodness, and immediately set about a reformation; fortified the city, and removed his idols and altars from the temple; made Eliakim priest*, Isa. xxii. 15., *and turned out Shebna; offered sacrifices to God himself, and brought the people to do so too.*

14 Now after this he built a wall without the city of David on the west side Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish-gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. 15 And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast [them] out of the city. 16 And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. 17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, [yet] unto the LORD their God only. 18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they [are written] in the book of the kings of Israel. 19 His prayer also, and [how God] was entreated of him, and all his sins and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they [are] written among the sayings of the seers*.

20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house†: and Amon his son reigned in his stead. 21 Amon [was] two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. 22 But he did [that which

* We are here referred to some other history then extant for a larger account of his sin and repentance. Particular notice is taken of his prayer; it is to be found in the Apocrypha, but whether genuine or not is uncertain: it is not unlikely but it may be so, for it is a good prayer, and much to the purpose.

† Perhaps he had given directions to be buried privately as an expression of humility. God continued him very long, he reigned fifty-five years, which was longer than any king of Israel or Judah.

was] evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; *he imitated his father's wickedness in the worst part of his reign:* 23 And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself, *did not imitate his father's repentance in his best days,* but Amon trespassed more and more. 24 And his servants, *his courtiers,* conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.

25 But the people of the land *avenged his death, and* slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead; *in opposition, probably, to some other son whom the courtiers would have set on the throne.*

REFLECTIONS.

1. THE degeneracy of the children of good parents is much to be lamented. Hezekiah, amidst his zeal for God, for his house and worship, no doubt took care of his children; but Manasseh proved very wicked. This is a very common case, and much to be lamented; especially as such are generally worse than others. Let this caution young people, and induce them *to know the God of their fathers,* and to reject the counsels of those who would corrupt and insnare, and in the end ruin them.

2. Those who resemble others in their wickedness must expect to share in their miseries; *v.* 13. As they were like Ahab and Samaria, so they were punished like them. The miseries attending vice are designed as warnings. If men will presumptuously walk in an evil way, keep bad company, and say and do like them, they must expect to be punished with them, or with heavier calamities, as their guilt is aggravated by what they have seen and known of the sufferings of others.

3. See the usefulness of affliction to bring men to repentance. Manasseh, while in prosperity, acted most wickedly and abominably. But when he got into prison, he began *to think on his ways.* The pleasures of the court intoxicated him; but the horrors of a prison brought him to himself. God's design in afflicting his people, is *to take away sin,* and bring them to repentance; which will show itself, as Manasseh's did, in humiliation, prayer, and reformation: to undo the mischief they have done, and strive to reform those they have corrupted, are *fruits meet for repentance.* The wisdom and goodness of God in sending

afflictions for this purpose, should be acknowledged. There seems to be an allusion to this story in Job xxxvi. 7, 8. *He will release kings upon the throne*, as it should be rendered, *and if they be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction, he shows them their transgressions. He opens their ears to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.*

4. This story affords great encouragement to repentance. We can scarce conceive of a viler sinner than Manasseh, who was so wicked himself, and did so much mischief: yet when he repented, and prayed, God was entreated for him, heard his supplication, renewed his prosperity, and lengthened his life: and, one would hope, saved his soul. This was designed as a pattern of divine long-suffering. *Let the wicked*, therefore, *forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The reign of Josiah: his early piety, and care about repairing the temple. The discovery of the book of the law, and the impression it made on the king; and the awful answer given to his inquiry.

1 JOSIAH [was] eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. 2 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined [neither] to the right hand nor to the left*. 3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; *that is, when he was sixteen years of age he worshipped God publicly, like David;* and in the twelfth year *of his reign, when he was twenty years old,* he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. 4 And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that [were] on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the

* His mother's name was Jedidah, 2 Kings xxii. 1., probably a good woman who took great care of his education.

molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust [of them,] and strowed [it] upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them; *to show his detestation of those idols, and their worshippers.* 5 And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, *and thus polluted them that they might not be used again;* and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. 6 And [so did he] in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, *where many poor people were still left by the king of Assyria,* with their mattocks round about. 7 And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem: *for he went about the country himself to see the work effectually done.*

8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. *He sent those officers of his court to give orders and assist the priests, and to keep an account of what offerings were made by the people.* 9 And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin; *for they had made a collection through the whole nation;* and they returned to Jerusalem. 10 And they put [it] in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD, to repair and amend the house: 11 Even to the artificers and builders gave they [it,] to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed: *that is, the chambers and buildings about the temple, where the priests lodged, and the stores were kept.* 12 And the men did the work faithfully; and the overseers of them [were] Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set [it] forward; and [other of] the Levites; all that could skill of instruments of music. 13 Also [they were] over bearers of burdens, and [were] overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Levites [there were] scribes, and officers, and porters. *The principal Levites were overseers, to see the work well done; and they were probably assisted and encouraged in it by Jeremiah, who began to prophesy in*

the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign; and also by Zephaniah, who lived at this time.

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the LORD [given] by Moses. *While they were repairing the temple, Hilkiah the priest found a copy of the law, which had been secretly hid when the idols were set up there: probably the authentic copy which Moses had directed to be laid by the side of the ark,* Deut. xxxi. 26. 15 And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. 16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do [it]. 17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. 18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. *And when the king perceived what it was, he was greatly affected with it.* 19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes *for grief and fear**. 20 And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, 21 Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found, *and what can be done to avert this evil:* for great [is] the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. 22 And Hilkiah, and [they] that the king [had appointed] went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tik-

* It cannot be supposed that all the copies of the law were lost. Hezekiah had taken care to furnish the people with many: and their being and polity as a nation, as well as their religion, depended on the knowledge of the law. But probably Manasseh, in his worst days, and Amon, had destroyed many, so that there were but few left, and those corrupted and imperfect. Perhaps there was only an abstract of the chief laws, for the use of the priests, like our abridgment of the statutes; without the promises and threatenings, with which the king seemed so much affected. The reading of the law had been neglected; the king had not written a copy with his own hand, as had been commanded: his reformation might have been according to these abstracts, or hints from some good people about it. The king, being impatient to know the contents, begins to read immediately, and as their books were written upon long scrolls, and rolled upon a stick, the latter end of Deuteronomy would come first in course, where he found those terrible threatenings, which so greatly impressed him, threatenings upon the king, as well as upon the people. Deut. xxviii. 36.

vath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; *Jeremiah and Zephaniah being, probably, absent:* (Now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college, *where the sons of the prophets and the young priests and Levites used to meet for instruction and discourse*); and they spake to her to that [effect.]

23 And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, 24 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, [even] all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah*: 25 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. *God had determined to punish and destroy the people.* 26 And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel [concerning] the words which thou hast heard; 27 Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard [thee] also, saith the LORD. 28 Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. *Because he was tender-hearted, humble, and contrite, and trembled at God's word, was fearful of the divine displeasure, showed deep humility and concern to avert the evil, therefore he should die before these calamities came.* So they brought the king word again †.

29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD. 31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes with all his heart, and

* This confirms what was said before of the part the king had been reading or hearing.

† As a more particular account of the things related, from *v.* 29 to the end, will be found in 2 Kings, chap. xxiii. *v.* 1—28., it may be proper to read that next.

with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. 32 And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand [to it.] And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that [pertained] to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, [even] to serve the LORD their God. [And] all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have here an eminent and lovely example of early piety. When only eight years old, Josiah was very good; he turned not to the right hand nor to the left; when sixteen, he began to seek God more publicly; to set about reformation; and exerted himself with vigour in it: and he did all this, though his father was very wicked; though his court and nation were very corrupt. A noble example for the imitation of youth! Early piety is peculiarly honourable in all young people, especially in persons of rank and fortune; and above all amidst the prevalence of degeneracy and impiety. When very young, but eight years old, he began this work, and with growing years he pursued it. Let us *go and do likewise; for God loves them that love him, and they that seek him early shall find him.*

2. We have great reason to thank God for the plenty of our bibles. It was a sad time in Israel, when scarce any copy of the law was found: no wonder they were so degenerate and wicked. This was a happy discovery of the original, as it both directed and quickened them in the reformation of their worship and lives. The king valued it highly; he did not put it among his rarities, as a curiosity only; but read it, and took heed to it. Let us be thankful that they are not scarce among us; and that by the invention of printing, that noble and useful art, (which came from God,) there is plenty of them; and so cheap, that the poorest may have them. Let us bless God for the holy scriptures, and let *our delight be in the law of the Lord.* We do the greatest honour to them, when we read and study them daily, and regulate our sentiments and lives by them.

3. We should cultivate that tenderness of heart which good Josiah manifested. Whenever we read the word, let us labour to have our hearts and consciences impressed with an holy fear of

that wrath which is revealed from heaven: let our flesh tremble for fear of God's judgments, and be deeply humbled under a sense of our guilt and violation of God's holy law: let us desire to know and do our duty, as therein described; and do what we can to reform and save others. Then, whatever becomes of them, the consequence will be happy to ourselves: we shall *come to the grave in peace*, and go to a world of everlasting peace; for, thus saith the Lord, *To this man will I look, and with him will I dwell, who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

The solemn passover which Josiah kept; his death; and the great lamentation that was made for him.

1 MOREOVER Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth [day] of the first month, *according to the law in Exodus* xii. 6. 2 And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD, 3 And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build *; [it shall] not [be] a burden upon [your] shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel, 4 And prepare [yourselves] by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son. 5 And stand in the holy [place] according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and [after] the division of the families of the Levites. 6 So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves and prepare your brethren, that [they] may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. *Every family was to bring a lamb, and the priests were to be particularly careful, both to do honour to the law, and set a good example to others.* 7 And Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, *for both might be used*, (Exodus xii. 5.), all for the passover offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand and three

* Amon probably removed it, to make room for his detestable idols.

thousand bullocks: these [were] of the king's substance. *These were to be offered on the seven days of unleavened bread following the passover; the king furnished them at his own expense, and the chiefs of the priests and Levites followed his example, and gave generously.* 8 And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites: Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover offerings two thousand and six hundred [small cattle,] and three hundred oxen. 9 Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethaneel, his brethren, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave unto the Levites for passover offerings five thousand [small cattle,] and five hundred oxen. 10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment. 11 And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled [the blood] from their hands, and the Levites flayed [them.] 12 And they removed the burnt offerings, that they might give according to the divisions of the families of the people, to offer unto the LORD, as [it is] written in the book of Moses. And so [did they] with the oxen. 13 And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance, (Exodus xii. 8, 9.,) but the [other] holy [offerings] sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and divided [them] speedily among all the people, *that they might give supplies to so great a multitude.* 14 And afterward they made ready for themselves, and for the priests: because the priests the sons of Aaron [were busied] in offering of burnt offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests the sons of Aaron. 15 And the singers the sons of Asaph [were] in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; *the music and singing continued all the time they were offering the sacrifices;* and the porters [waited] at every gate; they might not depart from their service; *they took care that none withdrew before the service was ended;* for their brethren the Levites prepared for them, *and brought them what was necessary.* 16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according to the commandment of king Josiah. 17 And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. 18 And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither

did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem*. 19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept; *thirteen years before his death.*

20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, *and every thing seemed to promise peace and happiness, all their hopes were blasted at once, for* Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him†. 21 But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? [I come] not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from [meddling with] God, who [is] with me, that he destroy thee not; *he tells him it was contrary to justice, for he had no quarrel with him; it was contrary to piety, for God had commanded him to go up and make haste; and that it was contrary to policy, for he might come off with the worst.* 22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. 23 And the archers shot at king Josiah; *notwithstanding his disguise they perceived he was the commander, and therefore attacked him‡;* and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. 24 His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had, *one that was ready in case of accidents:* and they brought

* This was a most extraordinary passover; none had been celebrated with such solemnity, with such great preparations, and with such great joy. It had been kept in Hezekiah's time; but they were not properly purified, and Josiah was more liberal in proportion to his abilities.

† The king of Babylon had conquered Assyria, and Pharaoh Necho, or the wounded Pharaoh, went against Carchemish, a city on the banks of the river Euphrates.

‡ I find all the commentators think this was rash and presumptuous conduct in Josiah, and disobedience to God. I own I cannot see it in this light. Had he died in an act of disobedience, Jeremiah would not have lamented him, nor would they have made it an ordinance in Israel to do so. The case seems to me to be this; Manasseh was tributary to Babylon, and probably to Amon and Josiah; there was a league between them, which included a promise or oath to assist or defend him against his enemies. For this purpose probably Josiah had a considerable part, if not all the land of Israel given him, as he went through it to destroy idolatry. We find two of his successors were bound by the king of Babylon; and probably he was the same; therefore he could not but resist the king of Egypt as a faithful ally. What Pharaoh says of God's commanding him, seems only an artifice. Hearing that Josiah was a prince of great piety, he thought this would prevent his opposing him. But there is no intimation that he meant the true

him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in [one of] the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

25 And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; *no wonder the good prophet was much affected, it was a sad calamity, especially considering the character of his successor;* and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel, *that the memory of this event might be kept up:* and, behold, they [are] written in the lamentations *.

26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to [that which was] written in the law of the LORD,

27 And his deeds, first and last, behold they [are] written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah †.

REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is the duty of every pious mind to observe all divine institutions. Josiah was zealous against idolatry, and as zealous for keeping the passover. This suggests a good lesson to us, to observe and keep whatever God commands us. The Lord's supper succeeds to the passover; it is a memorial of a great sacrifice and deliverance, and a means of supporting christian piety in the world. Notice is several times taken that *all was done according to the law;* which may intimate, that we are most acceptable to God in our religious services, when we keep closest to his word.

2. Generosity in persons of plentiful circumstances, especially for the support of religion, is highly commendable. Josiah, the chief priests and the Levites, all furnished oxen and lambs for this service. Those who know the value of gospel privileges and the excellency of religion, will not grudge any prudent

God. The word is not Jehovah, which is always used when an express command from him is referred to. Had there been any doubt in the case, he would certainly have consulted Jeremiah or Zephaniah; but if he was bound by an oath, it would have been an affront to God to have consulted him whether he should break it; and God was highly offended with his brother's son and successor Zedekiah for breaking his oath with the king of Babylon. It is therefore evident to me, that he was in the way of his duty; and his violent death was designed as a punishment for the people, though undoubtedly it was happy for him.

* The funeral poem is lost; it could not be Jeremiah's Lamentations, for they lament the destruction of the city, and the captivity, and not the death of the king.

† After this chapter, 2 Kings, chap. xxiii., beginning at the middle of v. 30, to the end of the book, may be properly read.

expense for the support of God's worship, to encourage his priests, as Josiah did, *v.* 2., and to provide for the necessities of the poor. This gives religion reputation, and is happy both for the donor and receiver.

3. *There is no knowing good or evil by any thing under the sun.* Good Josiah was slain in battle. Probably few of the people were slain then, though most of them were hypocritical, and disliked his reformation. God's providence is a mighty deep. He has various ways of taking good men out of this world; but they all die in peace; and *verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

4. The death of pious and useful men is much to be lamented. Many who have no piety themselves, will, as in the case before us, bear testimony to the worth and excellency of upright and zealous men, and do them honour at their death, though they may neither imitate them nor love them. This should recommend religion and zeal for the glory of God and the support of his cause, that it makes men truly honourable. Good and bad men will join to honour real worth; and *the memory of the just shall be blessed.*

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Jehoahaz succeeds Josiah; is deposed by Pharaoh; Jehoiakim reigning ill, is carried to Babylon; Jehoiachin succeeds him; and Zedekiah's evil reign.

1 THEN the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem. 2 Jehoahaz [was] twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. 3 And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and condemned the land in an hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. 4 And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt.

5 Jehoiakim [was] twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD his God. 6 Against

him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. 7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. 8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and the abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they [are] written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

9 Jehoiachin [was] eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD. 10 And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem. 11 Zedekiah [was] one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD his God, [and] humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet [speaking] from the mouth of the LORD. 13 And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.

14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen: and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till [there was] no remedy. 17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age; he gave [them] all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all [these] he brought to Babylon. 19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to

him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: [for] as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD [spoken] by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and [put it] also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, 23 All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah. Who [is there] among you of all his people? The LORD his God [be] with him, and let him go up.

REFLECTIONS.

1. ADMIRE the tender compassion of God to a very provoking people; therefore he delayed vengeance so long, and sent his prophets, rising early, and sending them with diligence and earnestness. And thus still his word, and promises, and warnings, and ministers, are all instances of divine compassion, and show that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

2. Observe how God resents the affronts and contempt offered to his ministers. This is given as a principal reason why he brought destruction upon them, they treated his prophets as enemies, because they told them the truth; they despised their words, and made a jest of their sermons. God will resent any thing said or done to make faithful ministers despicable, or to vex and discourage them: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me*, saith Christ.

3. See the sad consequences of rebelling against God, and refusing to hearken to his word. Zedekiah would not take warning though it was frequently and solemnly given him by Jeremiah: the Israelites likewise would not hearken; but went on in their wicked ways, till at length Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth; his temple, the glory of their city, their nation, and the world; was utterly destroyed. The terrible calamities of the people are most pathetically described in the book of Lamentations. How righteous and faithful, how awful and terrible, is God in his judgments! No word of his falls to the ground; when he judgeth he will over-

come. External privileges are of no avail without religion; they will not prevent his judgments, but hasten them. May the inhabitants of Britain take warning by this awful story; all things have happened to them, for ensamples or admonitions to us. *Amen.*

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

BS1150 .077 1822 v.3
An exposition of the Old Testament
Princeton Theological Seminary Speer Library
1 1012 00038 3648